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ABSTRACT

Volume 4 of "Northwest Education" contains four issues. Each issue has a theme and typically consists of an opening review article on current trends and research related to the theme, followed by articles on exemplary schools or programs in the Northwest, promising practices, outstanding teachers, or suggestions for program implementation or staff development. Theme issue titles are: (1) "Succeeding at Reading: Literacy in the Early Years"; (2) "Community Building: Imagining New Models"; (3) "Learning in Peace: Schools Look Toward a Safer Future"; and (4) "Arts Education: Basic to Learning." Issues also include book reviews; availability of teacher resources; guidelines for teachers, parents, and communities; profiles of resource organizations and Web sites; letters to the editor; and practitioner commentary. (SV)

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NW
EDUCATION

FALL 1998

SUCCEEDING AT READING
LITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS

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NW

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1

FALL 1998

THIS ISSUE

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COVER PHOTO: SAM GERE AND ZACK SUMMERS READ TOGETHER AT CLACKAMAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MILWAUKIE, OREGON. PHOTO BY JUDY BLANKENSHIP

Magic Chariot and Decoder Ring

The creaky old schoolhouse where I spent my elementary years had a heart that pumped life into the drafty corridors: the library. It was there, at Seattle's Lake Forest Park School, that I checked out my first chapter book. Scanning the shelves one day when I was in second grade, my eyes fell on the bright-yellow spine of a book called *Kid Sister*. "Hey," I thought as I pulled the book from its slot, "*I* have a kid sister." Besides feeling really brave and smart for choosing a fat book with no pictures, I felt the magic of finding a book that spoke directly to me—the wonder of realizing that an author had written about something important to my own life.

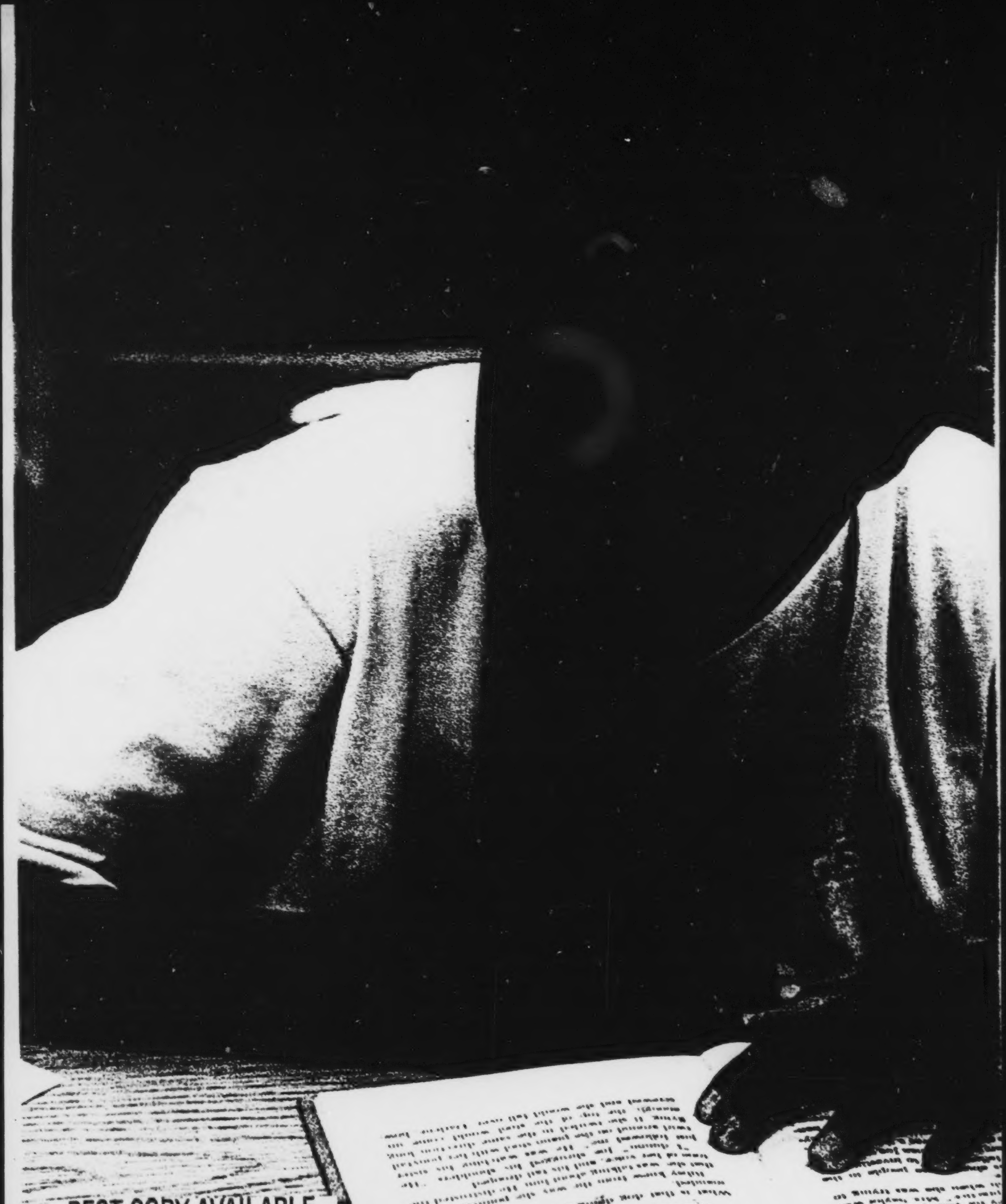
Not long after that I found a huge volume on astronomy. The librarian smiled as I lugged the big book to the checkout counter in my skinny arms. My dad, the Eagle Scout, had taken me outside one night and pointed toward the starry sky, tracing the constellations of lights that formed Orion, the Big Dipper, and Pleiades. I wanted to know more about the heavens.

The humble little school library, I began to see, was a ramp to everything in the world and beyond, everything that could be dreamed and imagined, everything that could be known, everything that could be hoped. Books became balm and refuge. Magic chariot and decoder ring. Periscope and time machine.

The days when my paperback orders from Scholastic arrived were better than Christmas. I remember coming home to a locked house one afternoon and losing myself in the crisp new pages of *Lad: a Dog* as I waited for Mom on the back porch. I remember hiding *Island of the Blue Dolphins* under my covers and reading to the glow of a flashlight long after my parents thought I was asleep. I remember being gently rebuked by a teacher for devouring my most beloved childhood novel, *The Hundred and One Dalmations* by Dodie Smith (1956), instead of paying attention to the lesson at hand. I remember lying on my bedroom floor, propped on my elbows for hours, turning page after page of a frayed old copy of *Little Women*—the same copy my mother had read as a girl.

Making eager readers of children is the first step toward making adults who read with skill and with joy, who read for information and for pleasure, who have access to all the wealth that we as a species store in the written word. Researchers are calling for an end to the "reading wars" that divide educators and communities into bitter camps. No single skill defines a reader, they say. No lone strategy works in isolation. By laying down divisive ideologies, we can work together to ensure that young children become strong and successful lifelong readers.

—Lee Sherman



SEEKING
COMMON GROUND

[illegible] STORMAN

T[illegible] the [illegible] decade.

[illegible] the second grade [illegible]

[illegible] test scores repeated that [illegible] back to basics [illegible] schools in Phoenix: kids lined up in straight rows giving rote responses to instruction that is [illegible] of [illegible] reading. [illegible] is the belief of some parents and politicians that young readers need to memorize the sound-symbol relationships of letters and letter combinations through repetitive drilling and worksheets. The "phonics first" and "phonics only" forces are gathering strength as reading scores in many districts stall or stagnate. In some states, such as California and more recently Washington, lawmakers are g[illegible] by mandating phonics instruction.

Few issues stir the emotions of educators more vigorously than the debate over how best to teach young children to read. But there is a healing movement afoot, a plea for armistice. Weary of the rancorous divide between whole language and phonics factions, growing numbers of educators are seeking common ground. Research solidly supports the

J. Blankenship photo, courtesy of Portland Public Schools Foundation idea that phonics and whole language can coexist when blended skillfully by talented teachers.

Calling for an end to the "reading wars," an important new report from the National Research Council says that children need both. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* concludes that immersion in language and literature (whole language) and instruction in sound-letter relationships (phonics) are both critical in the early years. A 17-member, multidisciplinary committee, headed by Catherine Snow of Harvard University, spent two years sifting through the findings of several decades of research to make its case.

Comprehension, the council concludes, is the reason for reading. But unlocking the meaning encoded in the mysterious lines, dots, and squiggles that form our written language requires mastery of a number of complex skills. Phonics instruction is critical, the council says, to creating readers who can grasp and grapple with texts of increasing complexity.

"Reading should be defined as getting meaning from print, using knowledge about the written alphabet and about the sound structure of oral language for the purposes of achieving understanding," the council writes. "Early reading instruction should include direct teaching of information about sound-symbol relationships to children who do not know them, and it should maintain a focus on the communicative purposes and personal value of reading."

This finding is not news to many practitioners, who have been quietly blending whole language and sound-symbol skills in their classrooms for years.

• "I don't think you can separate them," says Susan Marchese of Coupeville Elementary School in Washington. "They go together. I mean, how could they not? I get frustrated when I hear about teachers who are just teaching phonics, or they're just doing whole language. I don't know how you could take one away from the other."

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

KEY RESOURCES

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998) presents the conclusions of an extensive research review by the National Research Council. The council recommends that first- through third-grade curricula include these components:

- **Beginning readers need explicit instruction and practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds; familiarity with spelling-sound correspondences; and common spelling conventions and their use in identifying printed words; "sight" recognition of frequent words; and independent reading, including reading aloud. Fluency should be promoted through practice with a wide variety of well-written and engaging texts at the child's own comfortable reading level.**
- **Children who have started to read independently,** typically second-graders and above, **should be encouraged** to sound out and confirm the identities of visually unfamiliar words they encounter in the course of reading meaningful texts, recognizing words primarily through attention to their letter-sound relationships. Although context and pictures can be used as a tool to monitor word recognition, children should not be taught to use them to substitute for information provided by the letters in the word.
- Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both of the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent.
- Beginning in the earliest grades, instruction should promote comprehension by actively building linguistic and conceptual knowledge in a rich variety of domains, as well as through direct instruction about comprehension strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, and monitoring for coherence and misunderstandings. This instruction can take place while adults read to students or when students read themselves.

- Once children learn some letters, they should be encouraged to write them, use them to begin writing words or parts of words, and use words to begin writing sentences. Instruction should be designed with the understanding that the use of invented spelling is not in conflict with teaching correct spelling. Beginning writing with invented spelling can be helpful for developing understanding of the identity and segmentation of speech sounds and sound-spelling relationships. Conventionally correct spelling should be developed through focused instruction and practice. Primary grade children should be expected to spell previously studied words and spelling patterns correctly in their final writing products. Writing should take place regularly and frequently to encourage children to become more comfortable and familiar with it.
- Throughout the early grades, time, materials, and resources should be provided with two goals: (a) to support daily independent reading of texts selected to be of particular interest for the individual student, and beneath the individual student's frustration level, in order to consolidate the student's capacity for independent reading and (b) to support daily assisted or supported reading and rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult in wording or in linguistic, rhetorical, or conceptual structure in order to promote advances in the student's capabilities.
- Throughout the early grades, schools should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, summer reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal.

The report is available online at http://www.nap.edu. To order a copy, contact the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055, 1-800-624-6242.

A national Reading Summit being convened by the U.S. Department of Education this fall will focus on the council's report. For information on the summit, to be held September 18-19 in Washington, D.C., visit the Education Department Web site, http://www.ed.gov/inits.html#1.

- "Children have to have direct instruction in phonics," says Molly Chun of Applegate Elementary School in Portland. "But I try to embed that in a meaningful context."
- "I was trained to teach reading using the whole-language method, which minimizes phonics," says Wendy Fenner of Oregon's Clackamas Elementary School. "But after getting into a classroom, I could see that some kids just don't have enough tools to learn to read without phonics. So now I combine whole language and phonics, as do most teachers."

If there is so much apparent agreement among researchers and practitioners about how to teach kids to read, why is there so much vitriol in discussions of best practices? Partly, it's politics. The political leanings of phonics proponents—many of whom are conservative, back-to-basics parents and policymakers—often clash with more progressive educational trends and practices. The chasm between the two camps reflects a deep philosophical divide, not only about instructional strategies, but about the role schools play in children's intellectual development. At bottom the question is, Should schools teach children to think, reason, analyze, and evaluate, or should schools stick to the three Rs? Teachers and parents who favor instruction that stresses meaning over mechanics—who want children to look behind the words for enrichment and understanding—cringe at the tactics of some phonics practitioners. Drills such as the one described above suggest a rigidity and regimentation that can stifle curiosity and rob reading of joy.

But phonics doesn't have to mean memorizing rules and spouting rote responses.

"Most of the time the word *phonics* is used to mean 'knowledge about sound-symbol relationships in language,'" Heidi Mills, Timothy O'Keefe, and Diane Stephens say in *Looking Closely: Exploring the Role of Phonics in One Whole-Language Classroom.*

published by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1992. "When phonics is defined this way, phonics and whole language are quite compatible."

In theory, whole language was never intended to exclude phonics, most researchers agree. But in practice, many educators interpreted the whole-language philosophy to mean that students would learn to read naturally, without direct instruction, if they were simply immersed in a literacy-rich environment

The council urges teachers to keep their classrooms drenched in print, stuffed with quality children's literature, enlivened with discussions about books, astir with journal writing, book publishing, shared reading, and other "authentic" (real) reading and writing activities. Into this rich whole-language pot, the council advises, teachers should thoughtfully stir explicit instruction in sound-symbol relationships.

"It is time for educators, parents, and everyone else concerned with children's education to make sure that children have all the experiences that research has shown to support reading development," Snow said when the council's report was released in March.

o teach kids phonics is to give them a code—the code that unlocks the vast universe of print. Without that code, children are effectively shut out of libraries, bookstores, Web sites, magazine stands, newspaper kiosks, and the countless other repositories of written information, entertainment, and enlightenment.

Phonics means showing students how spoken sounds link up with written symbols. In English, which is an alphabetic language, those symbols are letters. But before children can learn phonics—before they can beginning mapping letters to sounds—they must first become consciously aware of those

IDAHO READING INITIATIVE

mproving the reading and literacy skills of Idaho students is the goal of a $24.5 million reading initiative from the J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Foundation. Designed to build preliteracy skills in young children, to improve reading performance, and to detect early reading problems and address them effectively, the initiative's four components will operate through a series of grants awarded over the next three years:

Read to Children—A grant awarded to the Idaho State Library and Idaho Public Television will be used for a program to improve early literacy development in preschool children.

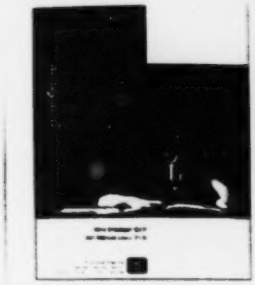
Early Reading Programs—To get kindergartners ready to read, a computerized reading program incorporating software, video, and books will be installed in Idaho kindergartens.

Reading Diagnosis and Assessment—To improve the skills of kindergarten through fourth-grade reading teachers, a course on teaching reading will be offered four times a year. A mentor/trainer course will be offered in each district twice a year to support teachers who have completed the initial course.

Supplements to Reading Program—A supplemental program that combines library books and computers to motivate students to increase their time spent reading will be available to every Idaho elementary and junior high school.

he Foundation is taking a proactive, long-term view," says Executive Director Sharron Jarvis. "Our intent is to provide Idaho schools, in a proactive way, with effective approaches to educational challenges and opportunities."

ounded in 1966 by grocery store magnate Joe Albertson and his wife, Kathryn, the private, family foundation fosters educational improvement in Idaho by promoting research, experimentation, and innovation



KEY RESOURCES

Building a Knowledge Base in Reading (1997), a research synthesis by Jane Braunger of the Northwest Laboratory and Jan Lewis of Pacific Lutheran University, offers the following "core understandings" about learning to read, along with suggested classroom applications:

1. Reading is a construction of meaning from written text. It is an active, cognitive, and affective process.

2. Background knowledge and prior experience are critical to the reading process.

3. Social interaction is essential in learning to read.

4. Reading and writing develop together.

5. Reading involves complex thinking.

6. Environments rich in literacy experiences, resources, and models facilitate reading development.

7. Engagement in the reading task is key in successfully learning to read.

8. Children's understandings of print are not the same as adults' understandings.

9. Children develop phonemic awareness and knowledge of phonics through a variety of literacy opportunities, models, and demonstrations.

10. Children learn successful reading strategies in the context of real reading.
11. Children learn best when teachers employ a variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy, and skills.
12. Children need the opportunity to read, read, read.
13. Monitoring the development of reading processes is vital to student success.

The paper, published jointly by the Northwest Laboratory, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the International Reading Association, is available for $12.95 from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204, (503) 275-9498 or 1-800-547-6339, ext. 498. A collection of classroom vignettes featuring seven Northwest teachers whose literacy practices reflect these 13 core understandings will be published this fall.

Coauthor Braunger conducts workshops for educators, school boards, and community members on classroom reading instruction that reflects current understandings of language and literacy development. For more information, contact Braunger at (503) 275-9588.

sounds: the *p* in pig, the *t* in turtle, the *a* in apple. They must understand that spoken language is made up of a series of discernable "phonemes"—about 45 distinct sounds in English.

Dr. Rebecca Novick, who specializes in early-childhood education at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, calls this awareness an "ear skill"—one that is vital to beginning readers. Without this basic sound awareness, Novick says, learners probably won't benefit from phonics instruction, which traditionally has taken phonemic awareness for granted.

"To the extent that children lack such phonemic awareness," the National Research Council says, "they are unable usefully to internalize their phonics lessons."

Although most children pick up this critical ear skill easily, it eludes many others, research shows. Without it, students typically have trouble sounding out and blending new words, retaining words from one encounter to the next, and learning to spell, the council reports. "Dozens of…studies have confirmed that there is a close relationship between phonemic awareness and reading ability, not just in the early grades but throughout the school years," the council states. "Research repeatedly demonstrates that, when steps are taken to ensure an adequate awareness of phonemes, the reading and spelling growth of the group as a whole is accelerated and the incidence of reading failure is diminished."

Parents, preschool providers, kindergarten teachers (and primary teachers for kids whose early exposure to literacy is limited) are critical to planting the seeds of phonemic awareness in the minds of young children. When children hear their favorite books over and over, when they hear stories and songs filled with rhymes and alliteration, their ears become attuned to the sounds words make, says Novick. Nursery rhymes—the adventures and antics of Jack and Jill, Little Miss Muffet, Humpty-Dumpty, Peter, Peter Pumpkin Eater—are a natural place to start. Children don't need to know what a "tuffet" is in order to hear the rhyme with "Muffet." (These rhymes often resonate in our minds for a lifetime, suggesting the power they can have on the young intellect.)

Tapping into young children's natural sensitivity to rhyme, first-grade teacher Molly Chun makes poetry a fixture in her classroom, where walls and blackboards are draped in verses written on chart paper. Chun chooses playful poems full of word play, like this one titled "The Squirrel":

Whisky, frisky,
Hippity hop,
Up he goes
To the treetop!
Whirly, twirly,
Round and round,
Down he scampers
To the ground.
Furly, curly,
What a tail,
Tall as a feather,
Broad as a sail!
Where's his supper?
In the shell,
Snappity, crackity,
Out it fell.

After Chun leads the children through a choral reading of the poem, she says, "Tell us two words that rhyme"—an exercise in phonemic awareness. She talks about the definition of the word *broad* and asks the children what the squirrel ate for dinner (suggested but not stated in the poem)—an exercise in gleaning meaning from text. Then she asks individual children to come up to the poem and circle blends (such as *br*) and "h brothers" (such as *sh*)—an exercise in sound-symbol relationships, or phonics. For Chun's students, phonics instruction grows organically from meaningful activities involving real reading. (See Page 32 for a closer look inside Chun's classroom.)

"A lot of teaching about consonants and vowels and the sounds they make must take place if children are to learn how to decode words," notes Michael Pressley of the University of Notre Dame in his 1998 book *Reading Instruction That Works*. "Decoding instruction," he adds, "prepares students to tackle words they have never seen before, even when they are well prepared for beginning reading."

But how much phonics is the right amount? How should it be taught? When do children benefit most from phonics instruction? Phonics fans often butt heads with whole-language supporters over these issues. The best approach, according to the National Research Council and other researchers, is to give phonics lessons in tandem with real reading and writing experience. Reading and phonics piggyback on each other: Reading reinforces the lessons of phonics, while phonics speeds the learning of reading. When a child reads an engaging story (usually a trade book or library book) of her own choosing, she is motivated to decode new and unfamiliar words because she cares about the meaning they contain. When a child experiences excitement and pleasure from the words on a printed page, she becomes an eager and critical reader—the ultimate goal of reading instruction.

"To say that children learn to read by reading is not to deny the need to provide explicit instruction and many demonstrations in the classroom," Drs. Jane Braunger and Jan Lewis say in their 1998 paper, *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading*. "The point to be made is that the amount of extended text reading that children do is directly related to their reading achievement. Without real engagement in meaningful texts, children will not become readers. This is why a focus on early instruction in isolated skills is so potentially damaging for young readers, especially those who struggle to learn to read."

Phonics shouldn't stand alone as a teaching strategy, agrees Dorothy Strickland of Rutgers. To be effective, it must be linked to a much broader set of strategies anchored in the full array of literacy activities. For instance, students should be encouraged to draw on prior knowledge, story context, and grammatical cues, in addition to sound-symbol cues, to figure out unknown words.

In *Teaching Phonics Today: A Primer for Educators*, published by the International Reading Association in 1998, Strickland suggests the following guidelines for learning and teaching phonics:

- Teaching phonics is not synonymous with teaching reading
- Reading and spelling require much more than phonics
- Phonics is a means to an end, not the end in itself
- Phonics is one of several enablers or cueing systems that help us read
- Phonics is one of several strategies for spelling
- Memorizing phonics rules does not ensure application of those rules
- Learners need to see the relevance of phonics for themselves in their own reading and writing
- Teaching students to use phonics is different from teaching them about phonics
- The best context for learning and applying phonics is actual reading and writing

In its 1985 research review *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the National Academy of Education offered an even leaner set of maxims: "Do it early. Keep it simple."

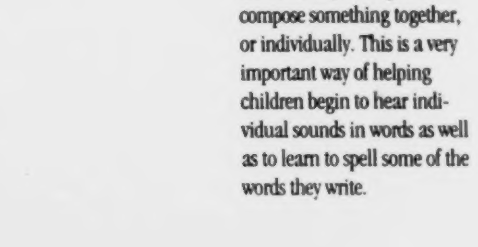
Learning to read
and write
A place to start

KEY RESOURCES

Learning to Read and Write: A Place to Start (1998) by Rebecca Novick of the Northwest Laboratory includes these suggested strategies developed by Constance Weaver for building phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge within a whole-language framework (see Weaver, Gillmeister-Krause, & Vento-Zogby, *Creating Support for Effective Literacy Education*, published by Heinemann in 1996). Among them are:

- Read and reread favorite nursery rhymes to reinforce the sound patterns of the language, and enjoy tongue twisters and other forms of language play together.
- Read aloud to children from "big books" or charts large enough for all children in the group or class to see the print easily. Run a pointer or your hand or finger under the words, to help children make the association between spoken words and written words.
- Part of the time, choose "big books" and/or make charts of stories, poems, and rhymes that make interesting use of alliteration, rhyme, and onomatopoeia.
- When sharing "big books" or charts, focus children's attention on the beginnings and ends of words. It is helpful to focus on elements that alliterate and rhyme, before focusing on individual sounds.
- The most effective and efficient phonics instruction focuses children's attention on noticing onsets and rimes. During the discussion of onsets and rimes, you and the children can make charts of words with the same sound pattern (to help children use analogies to read new words). Read alphabet books with children, and make alphabet books together.
- Read with children other books that emphasize sound —books such as *Noisy Poems*, edited by Jill Bennett; *Deep Down Underground*, by Oliver Dunrea; and Dr. Seuss books. Comment on sounds.
- When reading together, help children use prior knowledge and context plus initial consonants to predict what a word will be; then look at the rest of the word to confirm or correct.
- Talk about letters and sounds as you write messages to children and as you help them compose something together, or individually. This is a very important way of helping children begin to hear individual sounds in words as well as to learn to spell some of the words they write.
- Help children notice print in their environment—signs, labels, and other print.
- When children demonstrate in their attempts at writing that they realize letters represent sounds, help them individually to write the sounds they hear in words.
- Provide tape recordings of many selections for children to listen to, as they follow along with the written text. It helps to provide small copies of the text, not just a "big book" or chart.

The publication, which includes site profiles and training handouts, will be available this fall from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204, (503) 275-9498 or 1-800-547-6339, ext. 498.



"Except in the cases of diagnosed individual need," the academy said, "phonics instruction should have been completed by the end of second grade."

But what about those students who struggle in vain to break the code? Researchers have found that decoding words is extremely difficult for as many as 25 percent of children. Unlike learning to speak—an innate ability that develops naturally through interaction with a caregiver—learning to read is a somewhat "unnatural act," Novick notes. As a creation of humans (rather than a creation of nature), the conventions, logic, and structure of written communication must be given anew to each generation. With adequate instruction, most children pick up decoding skills. Kids who don't are left out of the literacy loop. The consequences are huge in a society that increasingly revolves around information.

"No matter how they are taught . . . some children will still need more intensive individual help," writes Constance Weaver in *Reconsidering a Balanced Approach to Reading*, published in 1998 by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Intensive individual help for struggling readers is the recommendation of a number of researchers, including the National Research Council. But they caution against giving these children tedious remedial work—worksheets, drills, instruction that is isolated from the rich, colorful world of real stories and interesting information. Slower learners as well as rapid ones need to participate fully in meaningful literacy activities.

"Because success in reading builds on the same skills for all children," says Snow, "we do not believe that those who run into difficulty need instruction that is qualitatively different from other children. Instead, they may need more focused, more intense, and more individual application of the same instructional principles."

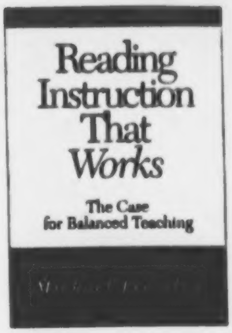
Children have the best chance to overcome reading difficulties if intervention starts in first grade, "before a history of failure has set in," Novick reports. Kids should get help while their natural curiosity and willingness to learn are still intact. One-to-one tutoring gets the best results, according to Novick, who cites a 1996 study showing that four types of activities are particularly important to the success of tutoring:

- Reading text that gradually and repetitively introduces both high-frequency vocabulary and words with common spelling patterns
- Receiving direct instruction about the letter-sound relationships with words
- Being helped to identify and spell words through numerous interactions in which the teacher helps the child bridge old knowledge and new
- Hearing the tutor's words as that tutor models how to identify or spell unknown words

It's important, though, that extra help not eat into the child's other literacy opportunities, especially time for individual reading and writing, Weaver cautions. She recommends a number of creative ways to build in extra time and help for struggling readers. For example, schools can provide:

- Support from reading buddies, including classmates, older children, aides, and senior citizens
- Instructional aids such as books on tape and high-quality, multimedia computer programs that engage readers interactively
- In-classroom support from other professionals, such as speech and language teachers and reading specialists
- Support before or after school or on Saturdays from such specialists (who could be given staggered schedules)
- Library support before and after school
- Supplementary literacy programs and events, such as schoolwide 'read-ins'

Word "chunks" as a focus of phonics instruction hold great promise for all kids, but especially for children for whom decoding is a troublesome concept. Molly Chun's first-grade classroom is hung with sheets and sheets of chart paper printed with lists of rhyming words that share groupings of letters: *fan, man, ran, van; cat, fat, mat, hat; did, hid, rid, kid.* Researchers have discovered that the brain stores patterns of letters—particularly patterns that often occur together, such as *an, at,* and *id* in the example above—rather than individual letters or whole words. Research suggests that readers read in chunks, too. A fruitful phonics lesson is to draw children's attention to "onsets" and "rimes" in syllables—that is, the consonant that begins a syllable (the onset) and the vowel-consonant grouping that follows (the rime). In the example above, *an, at,* and *id* are the rimes, and the beginning consonants (*f* in *fan*; *k* in *kid*) are the onsets. Once a child learns a word with a common rime, he is likely to recognize that familiar chunk when he encounters a new word containing the same letter grouping. Thus, he is able to read unfamiliar words more easily by drawing analogies from known to unknown words.


Reading Instruction That Works
The Case for Balanced Teaching

KEY RESOURCES

In *Reading Instruction That Works* (1998), Michael Pressley of the University of Notre Dame writes: "The radical middle...is only radical in contrast to the extreme whole-language and phonics positions that have defined the recent debates about beginning reading instruction....The most sensible beginning-reading curriculum should be a balance of skills development and authentic reading and writing."

The book can be ordered from Guilford Publications, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012; http://www.guilford.com

Reconsidering
a Balanced
Approach to
Reading

KEY RESOURCES

In the collection of articles titled *Reconsidering a Balanced Approach to Reading*, Constance Weaver of Western Michigan University says that effective phonics instruction:

- Is derived from and embedded within a rich literacy context that also integrates reading, writing, and literature with the use of oral language across the curriculum
- Requires children to think, not passively complete worksheets or engage in drill
- Focuses on patterns, not rules
- Focuses on rimes and onsets before single phonemes
- Combines attention to phonemic awareness with attention to letter/sound correspondences
- Is interactive and collaborative, involving discussion

The book can be ordered from the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801, 1-800-369-6283, http://www/ncte.org

hile most reading experts agree that both phonics and whole language belong in primary classrooms, the best way to blend them is less clear-cut. Teachers may find themselves teetering on an instructional tightrope when they begin to mesh the two perspectives.

"There is a balance, and a very delicate one, between not doing enough to help children learn to draw upon phonics knowledge to recognize familiar and unfamiliar print words, and emphasizing phonics too much," Weaver notes.

Many researchers share a deep concern that without a unified theory to guide instruction, teachers will throw in a little phonics here, a touch of whole language there—an approach that has been disparaged as the "instructional Cuisinart" or "tossed salad" style of literacy instruction. While researchers may disagree on the precise balance of phonics and whole language, there is consensus on one key point: Reading programs should be grounded in research. And most researchers, whatever their perspective, agree that meaning is the essence of reading, even for the littlest kids.

Writes Weaver: "I argue for instruction based on a coherent integration of the best of differing bodies and types of research and a theory of reading that puts meaning at the heart of reading from the very beginning, rather than as some distant goal."

Novick sums up the delicate balance teachers must find as they lead their young students to mastery of written language. "The ability to match print to sound is a crucial part of becoming an independent and fluent reader," she says. "Children also need to develop and maintain a positive disposition toward literacy and the ability to think critically and imaginatively. The challenge for teachers is to help children build a solid literacy foundation in the primary grades, one that provides not only basic skills, but also multiple opportunities to 'get lost in a story'—to reflect, reason, create 'possible worlds' through stories and dramatic play, and to share experiences, ideas, and opinions."

By reading aloud to young children and filling their world with print, parents and preschool providers lay the groundwork for literacy

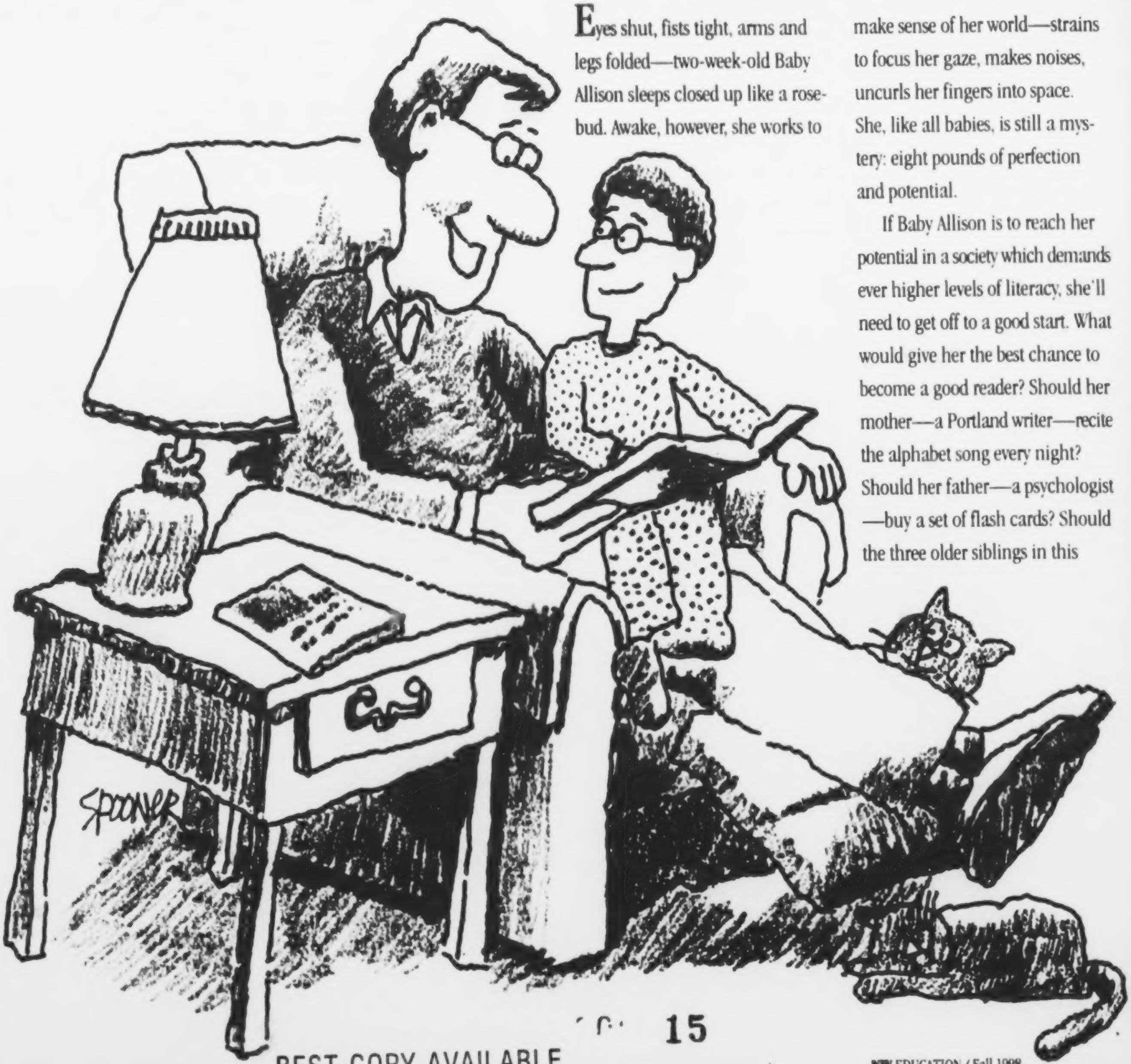
By CATHERINE PAGLIN

In the Beginning

Illustration: JOE SPOONER

Eyes shut, fists tight, arms and legs folded—two-week-old Baby Allison sleeps closed up like a rosebud. Awake, however, she works to make sense of her world—strains to focus her gaze, makes noises, uncurls her fingers into space. She, like all babies, is still a mystery: eight pounds of perfection and potential.

If Baby Allison is to reach her potential in a society which demands ever higher levels of literacy, she'll need to get off to a good start. What would give her the best chance to become a good reader? Should her mother—a Portland writer—recite the alphabet song every night? Should her father—a psychologist—buy a set of flash cards? Should the three older siblings in this



blended family correct her pronunciation when she begins to talk baby talk? Or should they all wait and do nothing until she reaches first grade?

The answer is none of the above. Give-and-take with loving parents, along with activities that stimulate her mental and physical development—not gimmicks, special training, or off-the-shelf products—will best help Allison get ready to read. If her family responds when she cries; if they talk and sing to her as they hold, change, feed, rock, and dress her; if they read to her; if they play games with her; if they provide age-appropriate toys and materials; if they answer and encourage her speech when she begins to talk, she'll not only feel loved and valued, but absorb valuable knowledge about language, books, print, reading, and writing.

Learning to read is usually associated with first grade; that's when most children "crack the code" that allows them to decipher new words. But steps toward that milestone of literacy begin at the beginning.

"They're not going to learn to read until they get that background," says Debra Lande, who has taught preschool, kindergarten, and first grade, and is a member of the Portland Public Schools reading advisory committee. "There has to be that foundation that is supplied from birth. It's being read to even in infancy, it's the rhymes, it's the songs, it's the spoken word, the language-rich environment."

The early-literacy field has not been as overshadowed by the whole-language versus phonics debate as discussions of reading in the primary grades. It has, however, been caught between two extremes of interpretation regarding what is developmentally appropriate, says Sue Bredekamp, Director of Professional Development for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

At one extreme, recognition of early literacy sometimes leads to inappropriate responses. Lande deplores what happens when, for instance, parents try to "shove a first-grade curriculum into a four-year-old."

"The children don't have that love, that excitement you have when you get something," she says, "because it's been told; it's been delivered, not experienced."

Equally misguided is "the maturationist notion that you don't do anything . . . (that) visual and physical development will just reach 'reading readiness,'" says Bredekamp. "Now we know that two- and three-year-olds can recognize letters, can be helped to see their name, can understand that print is where stories come from. Obviously, there are some really important things parents and teachers do."

Probably the most important thing they can do is read aloud daily. "The single variable that's been found in repeated studies as having an impact on children's school success—not just learning to read—is the number of stories they have had read to them before they come to school," says Dr. Jane Braunger, Senior Associate at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and coauthor of *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading*.

Reading one-on-one or in small groups allows small children to sit on a lap or nearby, to see small pictures and print up close, to ask questions like "Why is she sad?" and to respond to adult questions like "What's the rabbit doing?" or "What do you think happens next?"

Children can be read to by parents, older siblings, and other caregivers at home—and by child-care workers, teachers, librarians, parent helpers, or older "reading buddies" in day care, preschool, and kindergarten.

At the Portland home of five-year-old Penda and three-year-old Amina, the reading routine is firmly entrenched. The coffee table in the living room is covered with picture books, and many more line the bookshelf. Midafternoon is one of their story times. Amina chooses a cloth book of the song *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*. As they sing, her mother, artist Ronna Neuenschwander, points to the brightly colored print that highlights the names of the animals and the noises they make.

Penda, who has almost completed kindergarten, rushes impatiently through the song, anxious to show off her abilities.

"I want to read," she says, launching into a "Bob Book" about a dog.

"I can't see, I can't see," her sister protests.

"Oh, I forgot to show the picture," says Penda, holding the book up to her audience as she has seen her teacher do.

In their bedroom Penda and Amina have a box of books specifically for bedtime. If their mother puts them to bed, she reads one of

In the Small Small Pond

these. If it's their father, artist Baba Wague Diakite—a native of Mali in West Africa—he usually tells them a traditional tale. In fact, he has written down and illustrated one West African tale, *The Hunterman and the Crocodile*, which was published by Scholastic in 1997 and received the Coretta Scott King award.

"They can't go to sleep without a story. It's a nice way to get them calmed and listening," says Neuenschwander. "After the story, Penda will take a book to bed to read. Even Amina will take one to look through."

A PIG! A PIG!

The 18 two-year-olds at University Ravenna Pre-Threes Cooperative Preschool, a laboratory preschool of North Seattle Community College, get reading on demand, thanks to an army of parent helpers. "We always have a parent stationed in the library, reading to anyone who wants to come in," says teacher Marta Franzen. "Usually the children are the ones to pull the book off the shelf." Often they indicate their choice of topic by saying, for example, "trains" or "baby," she reports.

Franzen has the books organized by subject category so it's easy for any of her parent helpers (called "assistant teachers") to respond to requests. An informal check-out system allows children to take books home. A rack in the carpeted reading area displays "big books" and seasonal books. At the beginning of the year, for instance, this is where Franzen puts books about school and making new friends.

Similarly, at Helen Gordon Child Development Center, Portland State University's laboratory preschool and extended-day program, a low teacher-to-child ratio makes story reading available almost any time. On a typical day, a handful of three- to five-year-olds clusters around a teacher sitting on the floor with a book.

"Yay! Pig one!" shouts one of the children.

"This is called *The Pigsty*," says the teacher. Before she begins, she points out how the illustrator used a pair of socks to form the letter M in the word Monday. Then she reads from the book by Mark Teague:

Monday afternoon Wendell Fultz's mother told him to clean his room. "It's turning into a pigsty," she said. Wendell went upstairs.

The teacher pauses, draws in her breath, and turns the page. "A pig, a pig!" the children squeal with delight.

Much to his surprise a large pig was sitting on his bed, she continues. *"Pardon me," said*

Wendell. He shoved some toys into his closet. But the pig didn't seem to mind the mess and Wendell found that he didn't mind the pig either. He decided to take a break.

"What's a break?" a little boy asks.

"A break means, I'm not cleaning anymore. I'm sitting down, doing nothing," says the teacher.

From being read to repeatedly, these children have learned that reading is enjoyable, that pictures provide clues to the story, that books and print go from left to right, that print represents words and meaning, that stories have a beginning and an end. By listening, watching, and asking questions, they add to their vocabulary and increase their comprehension. They are beginning to make associations between letters and letter sounds. And by learning to love stories, they are becoming motivated to read on their own.

The Helen Gordon and University Ravenna preschools are well-stocked with books and adults to read them. It's a different story at many child-care centers in poor areas. In a recent study, researchers visited 350 child-care centers serving 18,000 children in such areas as greater Philadelphia to find out how many books they had, relates Susan Neuman, Associate Professor of language arts at Temple University and head of the Early Childhood Committee of the International Reading Association.

"There wasn't much to count," she says sadly.

Compounding the problem were child-care workers who, though loving and concerned for the children's welfare, did not believe listening to stories to be a cognitively challenging activity deserving time in the daily schedule.

The importance of access to books was vividly illustrated when the Free Library of Philadelphia and six other county library systems, sponsored by a grant from the William Penn Foundation of Philadelphia, flooded the centers with books and trained child-care workers how to read in an interactive way. Six months later, 400 children in the intervention group showed dramatic differences from 100 children in a control group. Those in the intervention group scored higher in letter knowledge, concepts of print, concepts of narrative, concepts of writing, verbal knowledge, and ability to recognize environmental print. Not only did these differences hold when the children were tested again in kindergarten, but the children in the intervention group also scored higher on phonemic awareness—the critical understanding that

TIPS

FOR WHOLE-GROUP READING TO PRESCHOOLERS

1. Select books with your audience in mind. Rhyming and predictable books are especially good for young preschoolers. "The books I've had the most success with are ones where they can all make a sound," says Marta Franzen who teaches two-year-olds at University Ravenna Pre-Threes Cooperative Preschool in Seattle. (Her students like *The Noisy Counting Book* by Susan Schade and Jon Buller.) "If they can anticipate being able to participate, it really rivets them."
2. Give an artful performance of your text. "I really have to play it by ear and ad-lib and shorten the story sometimes," says Franzen. If I start to lose them, I modulate my voice. I try to vary my voice—the pitch and volume and the speed. Sometimes I have them guess—(dramatic gasp)—*what* is going to happen on the next page."
3. Accommodate interruptions. "If they start to interrupt and say, 'I have a cat,' I might say, 'It looks like a lot of people have cats; if you have a cat, put your hand up,'" says Franzen. "It's important to have a pause sometimes."
4. Gauge the mood of the group before making the decision to read.
5. Use "big books" or books with bright, easy-to-see illustrations.
6. Don't force children, particularly younger ones, to sit with the group.

words are made up of separate sounds.

PEN AND LINK

Learning to write is the other half of early literacy, linked inextricably with learning to read.

"Many children come to reading through writing," says Braunger. "Many children are eager to write, and their reading of their own 'texts' is one of their first reading experiences. For many children, it is through their writing that their phonics knowledge develops. When a child uses invented or temporary spelling, we can see that they have phonemic awareness. They couldn't attempt to represent a sound with a letter unless they had the concept that letters represent sounds."

At Helen Gordon the opportunity to write occurs every morning, even before the child steps into the classroom. While the parent records the child's arrival time and initials the sign-in sheet in a loose-leaf binder, the child may open a companion binder, find the page with his or her name printed at the top, and make her mark, whether with a picture, writing-like scribble, or actual letters.

The desire to imitate adults is a powerful motivator for writing. Children are also motivated to write when they have a real-world task to accomplish, as Neuenschwander found the last time she and her family visited Africa.

"Penda had just turned four, and she wanted to start writing letters to people," she remembers. Penda knew the alphabet and asked her mother which letters spelled the words she wanted to say. "She got into doing really extensive letters, and part of it was because she really wanted to keep in touch with people and needed to, being in Africa. Ever since then, she's loved, loved, loved writing letters and stories," says Neuenschwander.

From the repeated letter-writing experience, Penda learned to read and spell certain commonly occurring words by heart, such as "dear," "love," and "the." At five, she is beginning to use invented spelling and sound out unknown words on her own.

"I think that's one of the things kids miss if you just sit down at a table and say, 'We're all making Bs,'" says Ellie Nolan, Director at Helen Gordon. "They're not seeing that a B is part of this word, and that this word you can use to tell somebody something. This S you can use to make a sign that says, 'Stop, don't touch my building that I just made.' This S can be for Stephanie whose toothbrush this is or whose cubby this is."

"If you can find anything that's intrinsic and self-motivating, you've got it made," says John Meskimen, now finishing his first year as a Portland Public Schools kindergarten teacher.

"When it's also student-generated, it becomes more like play than work," he adds. He recalls an incident from his student teaching in which the simple act of one child giving another her phone number led to an entire group of students making their own phone directories. After the students had gathered multiple pieces of paper with numbers on them, they realized they needed to attach names to the numbers. "It was completely spontaneous," marvels Meskimen. "It really was amazing. It spread like wildfire."

Before children begin attempting to write and spell, they can experience the power of writing through dictation, a technique that remains useful on into kindergarten and, for some students, first grade. For instance, when her two-year-olds finish a painting at the easel, Franzen will ask them, "Are there any words you'd like me to put on the paper?"

"I say each word aloud as I'm writing it, and then I read it back to them," she says.

At Helen Gordon, children are encouraged to write or dictate letters and stories. The children's writing reflects their wants, needs,

It Looked Like Spilt Milk

Read-Aloud Books: Birth through Kindergarten

Board Books

Clap Hands, Helen Oxenbury, Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Have You Seen My Duckling, Nancy Tafuri, Greenwillow Books, 1984.

Max's Breakfast, Rosemary Wells, Dial Books, 1985.

Old MacDonald Board Book, Rosemary Wells, Scholastic, 1998.

Where's Spot? Eric Hill, Putnam, 1980.

Rhyming and Pattern Books

Baby Rock, Baby Roll, Stella Blackstone, Holiday House, 1997.

Eentsy, Weentsy Spider, Joanna Cole, Morrow, 1991.

The Fat Cat, Jack Kent, Parents Magazine Press, 1971.

Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss, Beginner Books (Random House), 1960.

Jan Ormerod's To Baby With Love, Jan Ormerod, Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard, 1994.

My Little Sister Ate One Hare, Bill Grossman, Crown, 1996.

Over in the Meadow, Louise Voce, Candlewick Press, 1994.

There Was an Old Lady that Swallowed a Fly, Simms Taback, Viking Press, 1997.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle, Collins, 1979

Intermediate Picture Books

Crow Boy, Taro Yashima, Viking Press, 1955.

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, Kevin Henkes, Greenwillow Books, 1996.

Ma Dear's Aprons, Patricia McKissack, Atheneum, 1997.

Mama, Do You Love Me, Barbara Jossee, Chronicle Books, 1991.

Mushroom in the Rain, Mirra Ginsburg, Macmillan, 1974.

Officer Buckle and Gloria, Peggy Rathman, Putnam, 1995.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter, Frederick Warne, 1902.

Tikki, Tikki Tembo, Arlene Mosel, Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1968.

The Vingananee and the Tree Toad, Verna Aardema, Frederick Warne, 1983.

Whistle for Willy, Ezra Jack Keats, Viking Press, 1955.

Chapter Books

Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper & Row, 1952.

Mr. Putter and Tabby, Cynthia Rylant, Harcourt Brace, 1994.

The Mouse and His Child, Russell Hoban, Harper & Row, 1987.

My Father's Dragon, Ruth Gannett, Random House, 1948.

Winnie the Pooh, A.A. Milne, Dutton, 1926.

Sources: Susannah Price, Youth Services Supervisor, Boise Public Library; Chrystal Carr Jeter, Youth Services Coordinator, Anchorage Municipal Library; Cecilia McGowan, Youth Services Coordinator, Spokane Public Library.

fantasies, and fears. "Once upon a time there was a little girl named Emily," reads Thea's dictation, "and it was a sad time for her because she fell down at school and her mother and father were not at home and they never came to pick her up."

RICHES OF PRINT

Both reading and writing are supported by a print-rich environment in the classroom. At Helen Gordon, teachers give each child a symbol, such as a sun. The symbol and the child's name are on the child's cubby, art file, and toothbrush. Toys and materials bear word and picture labels. Common objects and areas in the classroom are also identified with print. Reflecting the culturally diverse make-up of the student body, Russian script, Chinese characters, and words in other languages are used in addition to English. Children's writing, drawing, and dictation covers the walls.

Dramatic play centers, used in preschools and kindergartens, offer endless possibilities for print enrichment. If children are playing in the "fire station," they can use a pad and pencil to take down an address when they answer a 911 call. At the "doctor's office" they can use an appointment book and a medical chart, or read magazines in the waiting room. If they are playing at the "grocery store," they can look at labels, make a shopping list, and write checks. At the "restaurant" they can read menus, write down orders, and pay with money.

At home, a print-rich environment might include children's own books, library books, letter blocks, magnet letters, bathtub letters, letter stamps and stamp pad, paper, writing and drawing implements, chalk and chalkboard. A parent can also alert a child to letters and words on everyday objects around the house and in the neighborhood, such as cereal boxes, cans, newspapers, clothes, signs, and posters.

"Every time we go places now, we're always calling out words," says Neuenschwander. "It was really exciting for Penda to realize there were people writing big messages to you everywhere. There are these big messages popping out—OPEN, CLOSED, STOP! It's not only in your house in a book, but it's everywhere out there." ■

In Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children, two respected organizations, the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), combine their respective expertise in the areas of reading and child development. This recently released joint position statement makes recommendations for practices and policies that support the goal of helping all children to read competently by third grade.

Several issues prompted the joint statement:

- The urgent need for high levels of literacy
- The increasing diversity of school children and the challenge of teaching them
- Misunderstandings about early literacy development and what constitutes appropriate teaching practice
- Inadequate preparation of child-care and preschool personnel; lack of specialized early-childhood training for primary-grade teachers

Following a review of reading and child development research, the statement spells out some recommended teaching practices. For the infant and toddler years, for instance, the document recommends "frequently playing with, talking to, singing to, and doing fingerplays with very young children," and "sharing cardboard books with babies and frequently reading to toddlers on the adult's lap or with one or two other children."

For preschool, one of the recommended practices is "adults' daily reading of high-quality books to individuals or small groups, including books that positively reflect children's identity and culture."

"We want every child-care center in the United States to begin to recognize the importance of oral and written language activity throughout the day,'" says IRA coauthor Susan Neuman.

Learning to Read and Write urges teachers to view reading and writing skills in a developmental continuum within which children will show normal variation related to differences in individual development and culture.

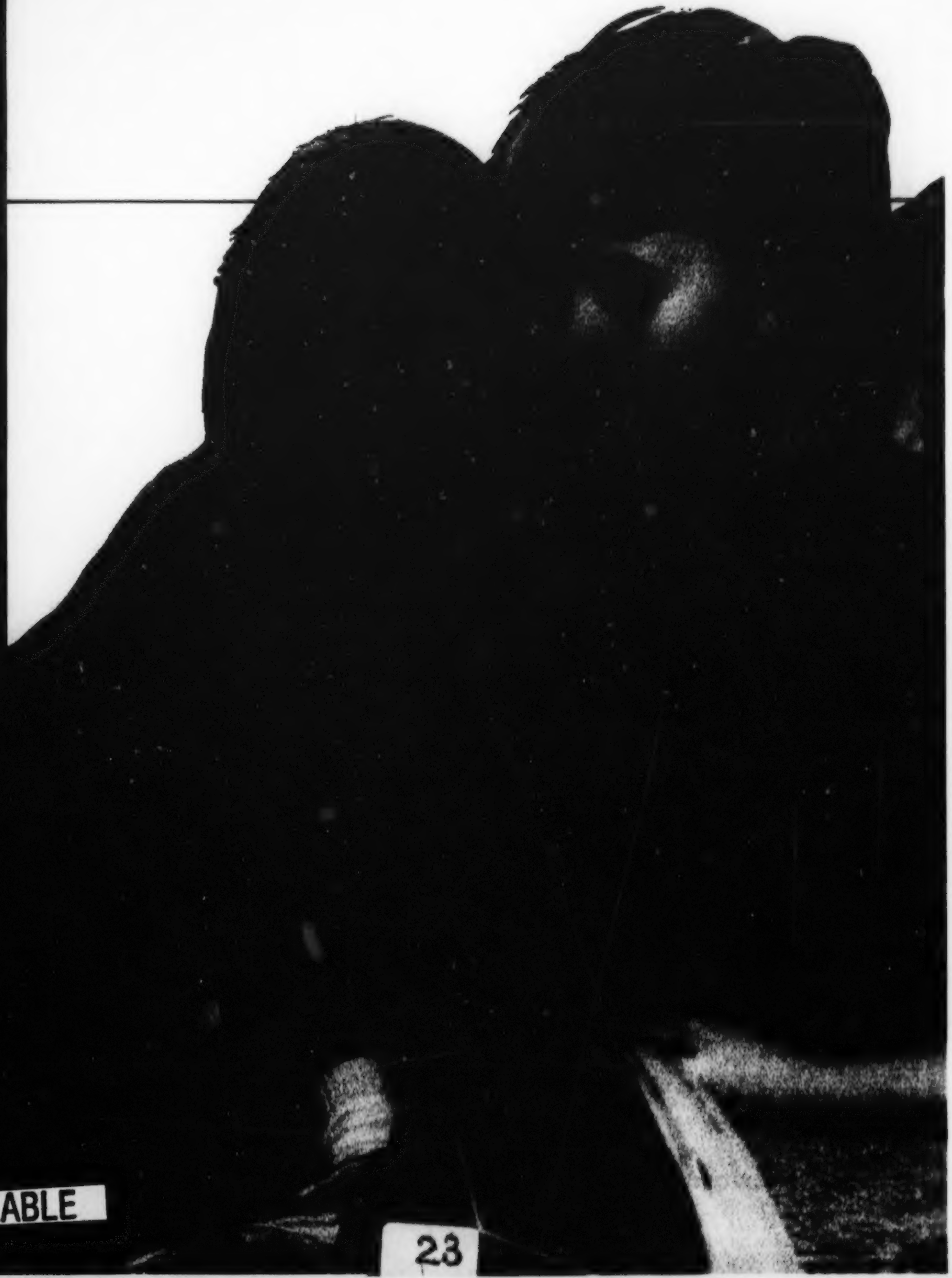
"Teachers need to find where kids are on the continuum and support their continued learning," says coauthor Sue Bredekamp of the NAEYC. For children showing extraordinary variation, intervention is necessary.

The joint statement sets out a sample continuum of early reading and writing development consisting of "challenging but achievable goals" and the types of teacher and parent support that will help children reach the goals. A goal for preschool, for example, is "Identify some letters and make some letter/sound matches." A goal for kindergarten is "Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds." A goal for first grade is "Orally read with reasonable fluency."

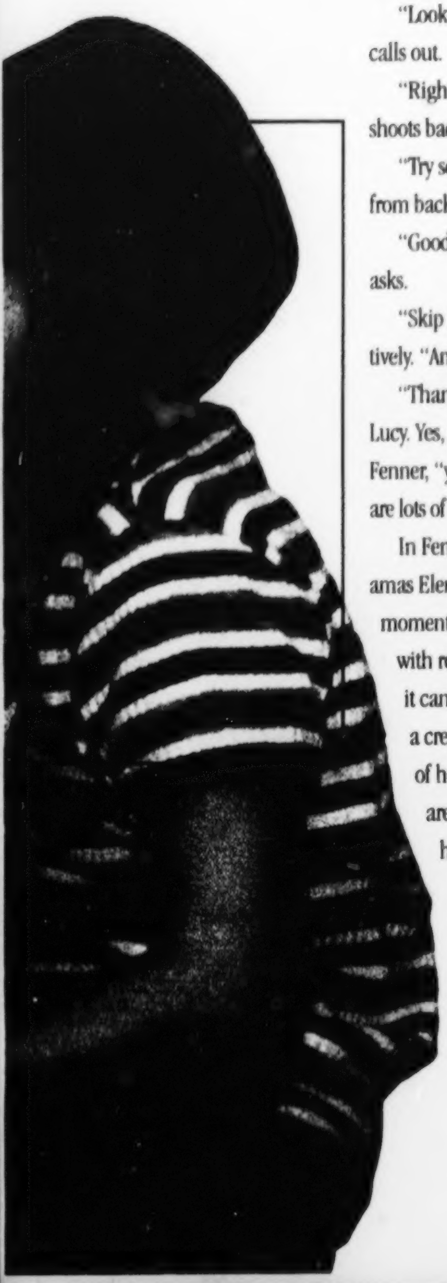
The IRA and NAEYC call for funding of policies and resources that would support the teaching and learning of reading:

- A system of preparation and development for those in the early childhood field.
- Smaller class size to facilitate individualized instruction: adult-child ratios of no more than one adult for every eight to 10 four- and five-year-olds with a maximum group size of 20; class sizes of 15 to 18 in the early grades.
- Adequate numbers of books (as well as software and multimedia resources) for classrooms and school libraries. Five books per child is the minimum necessary to provide the most basic print-rich environment.
- Individualized instruction, not grade retention or social promotion, for those who are not progressing in literacy development.
- Multiple, age-appropriate assessment strategies: no standardized tests before grade three or four.
- Access to health care: Some reading difficulties are caused by untreated vision and hearing problems.
- Access to high-quality preschool and child-care programs for all.

The complete statement can be found in the July 1998 issue of NAEYC's journal, *Young Children*.



WENDY TENNER
SHARES HER
PASSION
FOR READING
WITH HER
STUDENTS



MILWAUKIE, Oregon— "What do you do when you're stuck on a word?" Wendy Fenner asks her second-grade students as they drift off to private classroom spaces like "cozy corner" and "author's chair" to read their library books.

"Look at the picture," Christie calls out.

"Right. What else?" Fenner shoots back.

"Try sounding it out!" Josh yells from back of the room.

"Good! What else?" the teacher asks.

"Skip it?" suggests Lucy tentatively. "And come back later?"

"Thanks for raising your hand, Lucy. Yes, everyone's right," says Fenner, "you are *all* right. There are lots of ways to figure out a word."

In Fenner's classroom at Clackamas Elementary School, every moment of the day seems infused with reading and the excitement it can generate at the hands of a creative teacher. In fact, most of her kids hardly notice they are learning to read, they're having so much fun.

However, some of Fenner's 26 students are struggling, barely able to get through a first-grade primer, while others are reading at the fifth-grade level. "I taught a combined first-second grade last year," Fenner says, "and I tried to organize my kids into reading groups, and be sure no one felt they were in the lowest group. But realistically, I could only spend about 20 minutes with each child every other day. And it just wasn't enough. I was staying awake at night trying to figure out how to find time to read with all my kids."

This year Fenner is sleeping better. In the fall of 1997 the teachers at Clackamas Elementary created a system of reading blocks that includes every student from second through sixth grade. "We assessed all students in the first couple of months of school and tried to figure out where each one placed on a reading continuum," Fenner explains. "We ended up with 14 reading groups this year, organized according to grade level and reading ability."

Every morning, students gather in their "blocks" for one hour of intensive reading instruction. Those with the most difficulty learning to read meet in groups as small as six, while good readers work in groups four times that size.

"Now I still don't always read daily with each of my second-graders," says Fenner, "but it's a huge relief to know they are going to other classrooms for special reading attention, just as it must be a relief to other teachers to send their lowest readers to me every day."

It is 9:30 on a warm spring morning, and in a routine comfortably familiar to the children in Fenner's classroom, some quietly leave the room when she announces it's reading-group time. Other children stay, and more drift in from other classrooms. After a few minutes, 15 second- and third-graders, those who are a full year or two behind in learning to read, settle down on the floor. Fenner sits on a pint-sized chair in their midst with a book in her lap and an easel at her side.

PLANTING A PEACH TREE

When the room is quiet, she holds up *Coyote Plants a Peach Tree* by Mary Brown. "Now, how do you think a coyote could plant a peach tree?" Fenner begins.

"He'd dig a hole," Malika says.

"Right," Fenner says, "and how else?"

"Maybe the coyote eats the peach, and it comes out the other end as a seed and grows," David puts it delicately without saying any bad words.

"Good!" Fenner turns to the easel and quickly sketches a crude tree. "Now what are these called? *Brrrrrr* . . .," she prompts. "Branches, that's right. And these? Flowers, yes, but what's another word for flowers? Blossoms! Good, Josie!" She writes the answer on the easel, spelling it aloud.

"Now, when a bee comes buzzing around, what does it want?"

"Nectar," Josh replies.

"Yes! Nectar! And how do you spell that?"

Fenner opens *Coyote Plants a Peach Tree*. "I've covered the words because I want you to think about the story," she says.

Keeping the pace lively, she guides her students through the book, asking questions, writing new words on the easel, and directing attention to the pictures. By the time she's finished, the children have anticipated the story line, learned some new words, absorbed a small lesson in botany, and practiced spelling.

"It's more natural if the children themselves generate the vocabulary before they read the book," Fenner explains, "though in reality I am guiding them to say those things. When we talk about what they see on the page and I ask, 'What's this called? What's another word for it?' I'm looking for someone to say the exact word that's in the text. When Josie says 'blossoms,' I repeat it, write it, and spell it, so when students get to that word on their own, they'll remember it."

"Kids like it when I cover the words because it takes the pressure off," Fenner continues. "They can enjoy the pictures and talk about what they think is happening in the story without being distracted by trying to figure out the words. By the time we finish, they can't wait to get their hands on that book to see if their predictions match the text."

And today Fenner just happens to have enough copies of *Coyote Plants a Peach Tree* for teams of two to read the story aloud to one another. Children settle around the room in pairs and the pleasant drone of voices fills the air as Fenner strolls around looking over shoulders, making sure every child is either reading or listening. "How does good reading sound?" she asks.

"Like talking," Malika says, without looking up from her book.

"That's right," Fenner says, "and I hear a lot of good expression in your voices."

Self-esteem is a key issue with slow readers, Fenner believes, and she tries to make certain that every child feels a sense of accomplishment by the end of the hour, however small. Jack, a third-grader, has hung back on the edges of the group during the lesson, appearing to pay no attention. But when Fenner asks if anyone knows anything else about coyotes, Jack puts up his hand. He walks to the front of the room and says, "Coyotes don't hurt people, so we shouldn't hurt them."

"It's a real problem if a child is completely disengaged from reading," Fenner says, "but I do whatever I can to connect a low reader to the material. Jack, for example, doesn't particularly like to read. He's new, and he's struggling. So I was happy that he could share what he knew about coyotes and get some recognition."

Fenner usually spends 20 minutes a day on phonics with her reading group. These kids are so far behind in reading, she says, that they're just not catching up without the additional help of phonics. "I was trained to teach reading using the whole-language method, which minimizes phonics, but after getting into a classroom I could see that some kids just don't have enough tools to learn to read without phonics. So now I combine whole language and phonics, as do most teachers."

It's time for recess. The children line up at the front of the room, facing Fenner who stands in the doorway. They know the routine. The ticket to the playground is an answer to a question about *Coyote Plants a Peach Tree*. As each student steps forward, Fenner leans down and asks a rapid-fire question about the story, her hand poised above the child's shoulder. As she gets an answer, she lightly touches the child. Released, and pleased with themselves, the children run down the hall to 15 minutes of freedom.

"When these kids came to me, the only reading tool they had was to try to sound out words," Fenner says, "and they weren't very good at that." Sounding out words can be very difficult, she points out, because there are so many exceptions in our language. "Or maybe they get close but it doesn't match a word they know, so they give up."

Photos by Judy Blankenship

"Low readers really need the skills to feel good about themselves," Fenner says, "and I try to give them a cueing system beyond sounding out words so they can learn how to read on their own: Study the picture, look at other words in the text, think about what makes sense in a sentence."

ALPHABET SOUP

After recess, Fenner's full second-grade class of 26 students gathers on the floor in front of her. It's reading time for fun, and today she has chosen *Martha Speaks* by Susan Meddaugh, a story about a dog who eats alphabet soup and begins to talk. And talk. And talk. The kids love it. As Fenner reads, she asks questions, comments on the story, and holds up the book for everyone to see the funny illustrations. When Martha the dog reminds herself to "never mistake a leg for a tree," the kids go wild. "Tell your neighbor why that's so funny," Fenner suggests.

"Pee, pee, pee," the students whisper to one another with delight.

It's a continual challenge to acquire high-interest books for the classroom, Fenner says. "I want real books with real vocabulary as opposed to these canned 50-word books," she says. "I'm bored to tears reading those, and I can't imagine asking a child to be interested." The district gives her a set of standard reading books that are quite good, she notes. But to supplement those, Fenner brings in books that are designed for beginning readers regardless of their grade level. These books, Fenner says, don't carry a stigma for older kids.

The children in her low reading group know if they are given a first-grade book. "They don't want to use it when they are in second or third grade," Fenner says. "It totally shoots their self-esteem. A child like Jack, with a book like that, wouldn't have a chance."

Fenner's second-graders got their library cards on a field trip to the public library earlier this year. "The card has been a catalyst for change in some families," she says. "The kids were very excited to check out books on their own, and the whole idea was that a parent or older brother or sister has to take the child back to return the books and get more. But other families haven't shown any interest."

Still, Fenner continually reinforces the idea of using the library by bringing in a weekly hodge-podge of library books on particular subjects she knows will interest her kids. After reading *Martha Speaks*, she presents her library choices for this week. "Tim, I was thinking of you when I picked up this book on horses," she says casually as she tosses it on the pile beside her. "And Christie, here's one on whales that you might like." The kids clamber for these books as they scatter to read on their own for 10 minutes.

But certainly the most sought-after book this day is *The Spice Girls' Journey*, written at home by second-grader Lucy for the family book-writing contest—part of a schoolwide "reading round-up" week. With a floppy head attached to the top of its construction-paper body, and long dangling arms and legs, the book itself is a Spice Girl. One child barely puts it down before another eager reader snatches it up.

"On a very hot day," the story begins, "the Spice Girls took a long journey from England to Clackamas, Oregon, USA. They were going to stay there three mounts" [author's spelling].

"Some kids got a lot of support from their families in making these books," Fenner says, "and others didn't. But I get excited about whatever comes in because it's a book. I want these kids to love books, to have books in their hands constantly. That's what it's all about for me." ■

> "I very much prefer the feel of a real book as opposed to a thick textbook. I think it's important for kids to get their hands on the kinds of books they get at the library, and I'd like to have enough books so I could send high-interest, high-readability books home with my kids every day."
>
> Wendy Fenner

Susan Marchese's students
learn to love reading,
delve for meaning,
and challenge themselves

LEADING WITH THE HEART

BY JOYCE RIHA LINIK

BILLINGTON
END OF SQUANTO
(SPORT)

WHIDBEY ISLAND, Washington—They don't know it, but residents of a Puget Sound port owe a debt of gratitude to a woman who taught third grade in Rocky Point, New York, some 20 years ago. Lynn Petersen was wielding the chalk at Joseph A. Edgar Elementary School when Susan Marchese was a child. It was in Petersen's class that Marchese was inspired to follow in her teacher's footsteps, a path that led her to Whidbey Island and a blackboard of her own.

Just up the road from the mussel rafts of Penn Cove and the turn-of-the-century storefronts of Coupeville's town center, is Coupeville Elementary School, where Marchese teaches a multiage class of first-, second-, and third-graders. Her students are learning far more than the mechanics of literacy. Inspired by their teacher's enthusiasm for the written word and guided by her creative instructional approach, these students are learning to love books and to delve deeply into the literature they read.

In a 1996 research study conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Assessment and Evaluation Program, Marchese's students far surpassed their peers in reading comprehension. In the study, teachers were asked to read a fable to their class and then ask students to respond to a simple prompt, designed to gauge their level of evaluative thinking. After reading "The Camel Dances" in a collection by Arnold Lobel, students at other schools had trouble interpreting the tale, which is about a camel who follows her dream to dance. But the essays that Marchese's students wrote about the fable included analysis of the deeper meaning of the fable. It was clear to researchers that Marchese's approach to teaching reading comprehension was working.

Marchese focuses on finding "ways to make students want to learn and love it," she says. "They have to love what they're doing."

AN ABUNDANCE OF BOOKS

Books are the heart of the classroom. Because reading is the key to all learning, students need access to books—an abundance of books, "a lot of really great literature," Marchese says.

There are shelves of books, boxes of books, racks of books. There are Caldecott award-winners and Newberry picks, books that have been recommended by other educators and books that have not. In fact, the walls are so covered with resource information that the classroom itself reads like a book.

"Many of the books are organized by subject, and not necessarily by level," she says, showing a visitor around her classroom. "I also have some organized by level. White, for example, indicates a beginner's box; then I have red, blue, and green. And, of course, there are the chapter books. And books organized by author."

Shelves and bins are clearly marked to help students find what they want. Authors like Dr. Seuss, Eric Carle, and Laura Ingalls Wilder are all identified, as are series like *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Subject headings include such topics as cowboys, holidays, and biographies.

"It looks chaotic, I think, if you're an outsider coming in," says parent volunteer Nicki Hall. "But through the year, I see that it really works for the kids. Whatever a student wants, they can find."

The arrangement makes it easy for students to pursue their interests, something that Marchese believes is crucial. It's a sort of lead-with-the-heart-and-the-brain-will-follow philosophy.

"If they're interested in a certain subject, they can find books that will pique their interest," she says. "If they like a certain author, they know where to find more."

When students are asked what kind of books they enjoy, their responses are generally predictable.

"Books about dogs," says one student.

"Detective stories," says another.

Ben, however, has a surprising answer, considering he's only eight. "My favorite is realistic fiction." To clarify his answer, he explains, "That's something that could really happen, but didn't. It's not a true story."

Ben has learned about realistic fiction, as well as other genres of literature, from Marchese. One of her wall displays includes definitions not only for realistic fiction, but also for historical fiction, science fiction, folklore, fantasy, poetry, biography, and informational books.

"The standards I set are high," she says, "but the kids need to be challenged."

This may be one of Marchese's biggest strengths as a teacher. She sees no limit to what students can learn. Whatever their level, she makes sure they climb higher.

Challenging students at a wide range of levels is critical in a multiage classroom.

"I think that's always a concern with multiage," says Marchese. "People see that first-graders are challenged because of the third-grade exposure. But they worry about the third-graders. In fact, most of what I do is at a third-grade level, and I'm constantly looking for ways to challenge the more advanced students."

But that doesn't mean she neglects the more basic needs of first- and second-year students.

"This year," she says, "I had a number of beginners who needed extra help. So I focused a lot on skills work—like phonics, for example. I really hit phonics hard this year, and the second- and third-year students benefitted from the reinforcement as well."

On the issue of phonics versus whole language, Marchese is adamant that you can't teach one without the other. "I don't think you can separate them. They go together. I mean, how could they not?" she asks. "I get frustrated when I hear about teachers who are just teaching phonics, or they're just doing whole language. I don't know how you could take one away from the other." Marchese alternates between whole-language and enrichment projects (such as literature groups), and skills practice (such as phonics or spelling).

For assessment, Marchese logs a fair amount of one-on-one time with children, using a variation of a running-record model (see Page 40 for more on running records), where she examines how students decode what they read and why. She gives book tests, as well, to make sure students are performing at the level the district requires.

"If someone does get stuck, I try to guide them," Marchese says. She arranges for paired reading, in which one student can prompt the other. She also provides one-on-one time with a parent volunteer. "And," she adds, "it's important to choose just-right books."

How does one determine if a book is "just right?"

"Well, there's the five-finger rule," Marchese explains. "If they miss more than five words on a page, it's probably too difficult. If they can read the whole thing quickly, without any difficulty, it's probably not challenging enough. During independent reading time, I can help them sort it out."

She also has printed handouts for parents who assist in the classroom or work with their child at home. These include hints for helping a child sound out or decipher words, as well as an idea of the kind of questions to ask to gauge comprehension.

Indeed, comprehension questions are an extremely important component of Marchese's approach to teaching literacy. At storytime, for example, Marchese will stop before opening a book and ask students what the title suggests. Throughout the story, she'll pause to ask questions to make sure students are processing what they're hearing. When students take the "author's chair" to share a story they've written, it's always more than a recitation. The class listens carefully, because discussion follows. At poetry time, which takes place once a week, students not only practice their presentation capabilities, but spend time comparing new poems to others they've read.

LITERATURE CIRCLES

Eventually, students learn to ask the questions themselves. In literature circles, one of the children's favorite activities, Marchese lets students choose one of a handful of books. Small study groups are then formed based on same-book selection, and these groups read the book together, a little at a time, stopping along the way to discuss what's happening.

A group that calls itself "Hot Diggity Dog" is reading *Nate the Great and the Missing Key*, a story in which readers are given clues to help solve the mystery. One student has been given the job of holding the "question" card, a visual reminder to ask salient questions and keep on track. "So where's the key?" he asks, as the group flips pages back to a clue-laden passage. Citing this excerpt, they surmise that the key is on Fang's collar and not with the parents, as they previously thought.

When they've finished their book, each group "celebrates" by coming up with a creative project related to the story they've read. This may be a puppet show or a play, a mobile or a painting, or any one of a whole list of ideas posted on the wall. The members of Hot Diggity Dog are pondering their options, when one member suggests making a board game called "Find the Key." Teammates leap on the idea.

"Yeah, we can have pieces that you turn over to see if the key's there," says one.

"What about a space with a banana peel that says, 'Go back five spaces?'" asks another.

In group and solo reading projects, students summarize story lines in individual response logs, a task that helps them process the information.

"Reading and writing go together," Marchese states. "That's a really important link."

Because the thought process is paramount, the first focus of writing projects is to get thoughts down on paper, without stopping to edit.

"Techniques of grammar and spelling are taught after children experience the thrill of expressing themselves in writing," writes Marchese in a parent handout. Unfettered by an internal editor, students write freely in their journals every

* Finish readi
book.
* Keep desk

day, recording significant events, summarizing book passages, jotting down ideas for stories.

On other assignments, however, students learn to apply spit and polish. The six-trait writing assessment process, a model developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, has been an enormous help, according to Marchese. "It's been really great in terms of writing *and* reading."

Students apply the six traits—ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions—in "publishing" books of their own. Starting with an idea, they write a story draft, revise it, edit it, and finally "publish" it—adding illustrations, a cover, a publishing date, and a brief author bio.

Here's how a book by third-grader Elyse begins: *"Down," I yell as the 10-month-old puppy jumps on the guest. "Down, Beau!" He runs over to me, tongue hanging out, a smile on his face. That's my puppy, Beau. A jumpy, happy, black-and-white 10-month-old puppy.*

The work demonstrates that Elyse is far past simple Dick-and-Jane sentence structure and has even begun to grasp concepts like establishing voice and employing interesting details, in addition to using more complex mechanics. Later in the story, she even ventures into metaphors when she compares the shape of a dog toy to a snowman. She is extremely proud of her book and is already thinking of the next one.

Like others in the class, Elyse clearly loves what she's doing. In fact, it's not unusual to see Marchese's students sitting inside at recess. First-grader Katie elects to stay in to finish a piece on orcas. Third-grader Ben is hard at work on a book celebration project. When the schedule occasionally gets off track, and Marchese cuts down on silent, sustained reading time, students are disappointed.

TEACHING OPS

Marchese never misses an opportunity to teach. Instead of having students draw crayon hearts or flowers for Mother's Day cards, Marchese invents a more meaningful project.

"What's the first place you remember?" she asks her students. "The first place you lived?"

A dozen hands shoot up.

"I lived in Alaska," says one child.

"I've always lived here," says another.

"What do you remember about the place you lived?" Marchese asks. "Describe it."

When they answer, she prompts them with further questions: "What color was the fence? Were there any flowers in the garden?"

Once they have a picture in mind, she has them transfer the image to paper.

When storytime arrives later in the day, Marchese introduces a book called *What You Know First*. For the next 20 minutes, chins rest on elbows and knees, pigtails hang motionless, eyes are glued to the book in Marchese's hands. After the enchantment of the story has ended, Marchese pulls them back into the classroom with a simple question: What do you think the story is about?

The more advanced third-graders wave their hands frantically, but Marchese waits for some of the first- and second-graders to speak. Little by little, they sort through the events of the story, and Marchese weaves the older students into the discussion, letting them prompt the younger. It turns out the story is about a farm on which a young girl lived, the first place she remembers. The children's eyes light up when they grasp the connection to the pictures they've just drawn.

Excited, they continue to discuss the story, Marchese prompting them further with questions about sensory details. A student remembers a reference to a cow's soft ear. Another remembers the scent of hay. Next, the students put pencil to paper to write *their* stories, taking care to include details like those in the story they've just heard.

This learning experience is something mothers will undoubtedly appreciate more than a generic holiday message.

A number of these mothers—and some fathers—visit the classroom to help out.

"I'm Susan's biggest advocate," says parent volunteer Amy Hauser. "I mean, there are a lot of teachers who have just one grade level, and they don't really have a handle on where their students are, assessmentwise. Susan really knows where each kid is at, and how to challenge each one at their level.

"And she does it creatively," Hauser continues. "Last year, she did this thing with imagery. It was wonderful. She would read a section from a story that included references to imagery, and then the children would draw a picture of what they envisioned. In their pictures, they would include key words that helped them visualize. I remember one day, she even read a passage from *Snow Falling On Cedars* (a bestseller by Northwest author by David Guterson)."

"If I'm reading something that strikes me," Marchese says, "I'll bring it in and tell the kids, 'I really like this part in this book I'm reading,' and I'll share a little bit with them."

Children, it's true, learn from

example. And Marchese sets a good one. Students get excited about reading and writing and learning in this classroom, in part because their teacher gets excited about reading and writing and learning.

Perhaps Dan Sakaue, Principal of Coupeville Elementary, says it best: "She's the kind of teacher you want your kids to have."

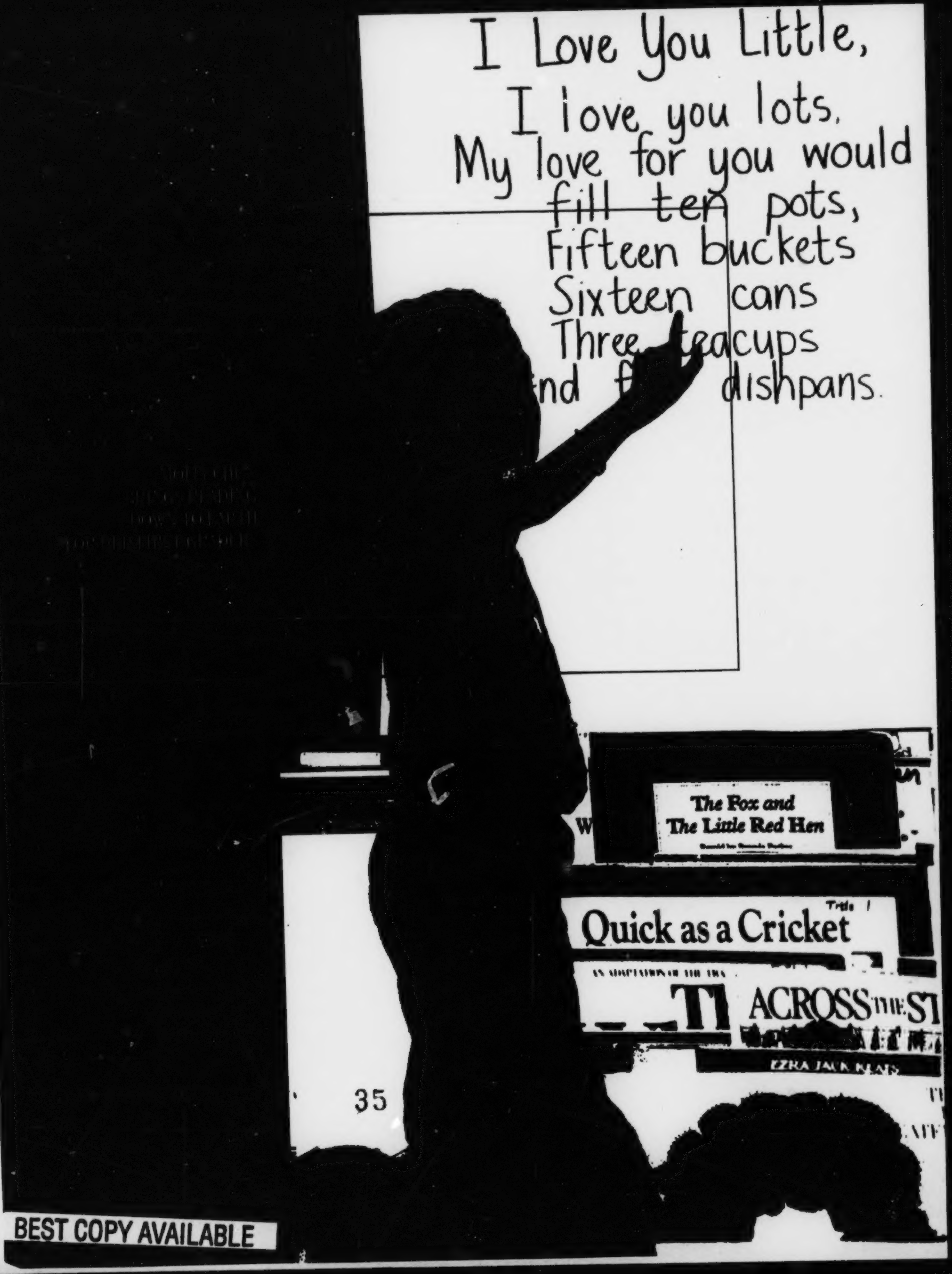
There is no doubt that Marchese has made an impact that will extend far beyond Coupeville and even Whidbey Island. In fact, second-grader Katie has already announced her plan to follow in Marchese's footsteps.

"When I grow up," she says, "I want to be a teacher like Ms. Marchese."

And so the path continues. ■

> "Students have to love what they're doing."
> —Susan Marchese

Photos by Joyce Riha Linik



I Love You Little,
I love you lots.
My love for you would
fill ten pots,
Fifteen buckets
Sixteen cans
Three teacups
nd f dishpans.

The Fox and
The Little Red Hen
Title I
Quick as a Cricket
ACROSS THE ST
EZRA JACK KEATS

PORTLAND, Oregon— "One of our tadpoles got his front legs!" Nicholas tells a visitor, pointing to a big glass jar alive with squiggling baby frogs. The first-grader's eyes, wide with wonder, betray the pride and excitement he feels as he shares his news.

For several months, Nicholas and his classmates at Applegate Elementary School have witnessed the drama of emerging life. They've seen clusters of slimy eggs yield big-eyed amphibians, and cottony cocoons produce orange-and-black-winged butterflies. But far from being confined to glass jars, these real-life science lessons have spilled out and spread to every corner of Room 7. Veteran teacher Molly Chun has blended frogs and bugs, snakes and turtles, spiders and crabs into the students' reading and writing activities. Drawing on a rich collection of children's literature and a mixed bag of creative teaching strategies, she weaves discrete bits and pieces of learning into a coherent web of meaning for her 20 students.

Using the big book *Tadpole Diary* by David Drew as a model, the students individually record their week-by-week observations of their classroom frogs' development. (Another big book, *Caterpillar Diary* by the same author, provides a model for recording butterfly observations.) The students then pool their knowledge and identify the gaps in their understanding. As the kids call out bits of information, Chun records them boldly with a black marker on white chart paper for all to see.

"What do you know about tadpoles?" Chun asks the children, who sit cross-legged on a frayed square of carpet in one corner of the room.

"They're tiny!" one child volunteers.

"They're slippery," offers another.

"They swim with their tails," a third calls out.

Chun lists the children's statements, one after the other. Then she creates a second column on the chart paper, labeled, "What do you want to know about tadpoles?" Again, she writes down the children's words.

"When do they learn to hop?" a student wonders.

"When do they eat flies and bugs?

"Do they have nests?"

In another seamless blending of science and literacy, where life and print merge, the students create a collaborative poem based on their scientific observations. "Caterpillars" by Room 7 goes like this:

Caterpillars
wiggling,
eating,
hanging,
shivering,
crawling,
inching,
creeping,
growing,
sleeping,
changing into cocoons.

Embodying children's speech in print—showing them that the words they speak have written equivalents—can help young children make the critical link between sounds and letters necessary for reading, research has found.

The small scientists, peering through jeweler's lenses to enlarge their vision, examine not only the classroom frogs, but also the flora and fauna of the city park that adjoins their urban campus. After an hour of outdoor exploration one warm April afternoon, Chun's students share their observations, likening each seen object to something else they've encountered in their six or seven years on earth. Their analogies—where they verbally connect new information with old—paint vivid pictures of the transforming power of the magnifying lenses on their world. But even more importantly, they show the power of words to communicate and illuminate experience. To the question, "What did you see, and what else did it remind you of?" came responses like these:

"I saw a little gray spider that looked like a monster."

"I saw tiny yellow spiders that looked like Charlotte's spiders."

"I saw pitch that looked like gold."

"I saw a hole in a tree that looked like a cave."

"I saw the seed of a wishing flower that looked like a nut."

Says Chun: "I really believe in the constructivist theory—that children learn by making meaning out of their world."

She characterizes her approach to literacy instruction as whole language. But in her two decades of classroom experience, Chun has found that explicit phonics is a necessary component of early-literacy instruction.

"Children have to have direct instruction in phonics," says Chun. "But I try to embed that in a meaningful context. If I give the kids a worksheet, which they get every once in a while, they'll do it, but they don't latch onto it. It's not meaningful. It's very frustrating for them a lot of the time."

Direct instruction in phonics is particularly critical in inner-city schools such as Applegate, Chun notes. Although her students come to school with "wonderful, rich home language," she says, they often lack experience with "school language"—the language and conventions of print. The books, magazines, newspapers, bedtime stories, and other opportunities that prepare kids to read are missing in many low-income homes.

BURSTING WITH WORDS

Any deficit in kids' exposure to "school language" is quickly erased when they come to Chun's class. Room 7 bursts with written words; the walls drip with print.

Hundreds of books, big and small, are crammed into every plastic tub and wooden shelf. Hanging on clotheslines and every available vertical surface are sheets of chart paper covered with hand-printed words. The paper holds the written records of students' observations on tadpoles and other natural phenomena. It displays light-hearted poems the children recite and study together, circling blends (*bl, br, pr*) and digraphs (*ai, ea, ou*), including the "h brothers" (*th, ph*), with colored markers. There are one-sentence summaries of chapters Chun has read aloud from books such as ***My Father's Dragon*** by Ruth Gannett. There are lists and lists of rhyming words (*cat, bat, fat, mat; big, fig, dig, jig*).

And there is the "pocket chart" —a piece of blue canvas covered with horizontal rows of plastic pockets. Each pocket holds a manila card. Printed on each card is a common word, most with just one syllable (*at, be, by, go, see, me, am, good, saw, down*). Chun describes this low-tech apparatus as "incredibly important" to her literacy instruction. By letting kids handle and manipulate words, the pocket chart gives her teaching the visual and tactile qualities young children need for learning.

"The pocket chart was God's gift to elementary teachers," Chun says. "I use it constantly."

One morning in May, the first-graders read a poem called "Bubble Gum." Children take turns "finger pointing" as they read the words aloud for the rest of the class:

I'm in trouble,
made a bubble,
peeled it off my nose.

Felt a rock
inside my sock,
got gum between my toes.

Made another,
told my brother
we could blow a pair.

Give three cheers,
now our ears
are sticking to our hair.

After the students search the poem for words with the long *e* sound *(peeled, between, three)*, Chun says: "Now, look at the pocket chart. The poem is in the pocket chart. What's wrong with that poem?"

"It's scrambled!" Levander calls out.

"Does it make sense?" the teacher asks. "Does it sound right?"

"No!" the children chime.

One by one, students go to the pocket chart and rearrange the scrambled lines. Jessica struggles when it's her turn, trying the words this way and that, while her seated classmates squirm impatiently, calling "Nope!" "Nope!" to her various attempts. With help from Carmella, she finally finds the proper order.

Next, Chun sits in a threadbare wing chair, her students clustered at her feet. Holding up a picture book for them to see, she says: "This is the ***Icky Bug Alphabet Book*** by

Photo by Douglas [illegible]

Jerry Pallotta. What do you think this book is about?"

"The first bug is probably going to start with an A and the next bug starts with a B and on like that," Larry volunteers.

"Oh, for Pete's sake, Larry. Did you read this book already?" Chun responds in mock amazement.

She reads to them about ants, bees, crickets, and dragonflies.

"E is for earwig."

"Ooooh," the students groan in disgust.

"F is for...you know this bug, too. What's the bug that lights up?"

"Firefly!" they call out in unison.

"L is for ladybug. You guys know this one. Gardeners love ladybugs, because...what's that little green bug they eat?

"Aphins?" someone offers.

"Aphids," she gently corrects.

The bugs inspire lots of comments from the kids, whose recent shared-reading lessons have featured such insect-centered stories as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Very Quiet Cricket*, and *The Grouchy Ladybug*, all by Eric Carle. James knows that ants are strong. Jessica thinks the moth's wings are pretty. Larry once caught a grasshopper. Nicholas once saw a scorpion sting a fly. "The fly died in two seconds," he volunteers. Chun admits she wouldn't mind being a queen bee, lounging in the hive while all the other bees buzz to her command.

The children return to their seats, each with a big sheet of paper divided into six boxes. Their assignment is to draw the six bugs they liked best in the alphabet book. When they finish drawing, Chun tells them, they may write about the bugs on the back of their paper. Meanwhile, the teacher meets with small groups (she calls them "guided groups") for reading practice. All but four of Chun's first-graders are reading at or above grade level. Two of her groups, in fact, are reading at second-grade level or higher; with these, she meets twice a week. The other groups—those that are having more trouble—meet daily.

Using leveled books such as *Tales of Amanda Pig* (a Puffin "Easy-to-Read" book), *Morris Goes to School* (an "I Can Read" book from Harper Trophy), and *Hungry, Hungry Sharks* (a "Step Into Reading" book from Random House), Chun first reads the story aloud to the group. Then the children read it in chorus. Only after they have heard the story and talked about it does Chun call on them to read aloud by themselves. If a child struggles, Chun pairs her with a stronger reader, and the two read in tandem.

As each child reads, Chun keeps an informal "running record" (see

Page 40 for a description of a running record), where she notes which words or concepts are stumbling blocks. One of her groups, for example, was tripping over the distinction between *the*, *then*, and *they*. "Look at the end of the word," Chun reminds Terra when the little girl mistakes *they* for *the*.

"Kids need book language modeled," Chun says. "We spend a lot of time reading aloud. Sharing the book together a few times first helps them with the pattern and the language of the story."

Each day, each student takes a copy of his guided-group book home in a zip-lock bag. Their assignment: Read for 20 minutes at home, independently or with a parent.

"They really just need a lot of practice," Chun says. "For a few children, reading comes naturally. But for most, it takes a lot of practice, a lot of experience. Parents need to understand that."

JUMP ROPE RHYMES

Teaching children to read, says Chun, requires "filling their world with print." For fledgling readers, that print needs to be "patterned, predictable, and repetitive," she says.

Jump rope rhymes— those silly, sing-song poems children have jumped to for generations—offer a perfect on-ramp for first-graders' journey into literacy, Chun has discovered. She begins each year by teaching the rhymes orally—old favorites like this:

Little Arrabella Miller
found a furry caterpillar.
First it crawled upon her mother,
then upon her baby brother.
They said, "Arrabella Miller
take away that caterpillar.

And like this:

Bee, bee, bumble bee,
Stung a boy upon his knee,
Stung a pig upon his snout
And I declare that you are out!

After learning the words, clapping the rhythm, and chanting the rhymes while jumping rope on the playground, the students finger-point the rhymes in the pocket chart. Finally, Chun gives each child a rhyme printed on 8 ½" x 11" paper, where they finger-point the words and draw pictures to illustrate them.

Because jump rope rhymes are rooted in play and physical activity, they are a natural "jump-off point" for young readers, Chun says. In workshops she gives for other teachers, Chun suggests using the rhymes to build such skills as recognizing letters; identifying beginning, middle, and ending consonant sounds; identifying blends and digraphs; locating word endings such as *ed* and *ing*, locating rhyming words; and understanding short and long vowel sounds.

In those early weeks of autumn, Chun hits hard on the basic concepts of print: directionality (left to right, top to bottom), sentence conventions (initial capital letter and punctuation), letter recognition, and the alphabetic principal (letter-sound relationships).

"It takes a lot of pointing out print and bringing it to their attention," she says.

After illustrating the classroom collection of jump rope rhymes, Chun's students write and illustrate their own original stories—stories about building a doghouse or becoming a musician or playing with neighborhood friends. The stories are keyboarded on the computer by the classroom aide and "published" in book form.

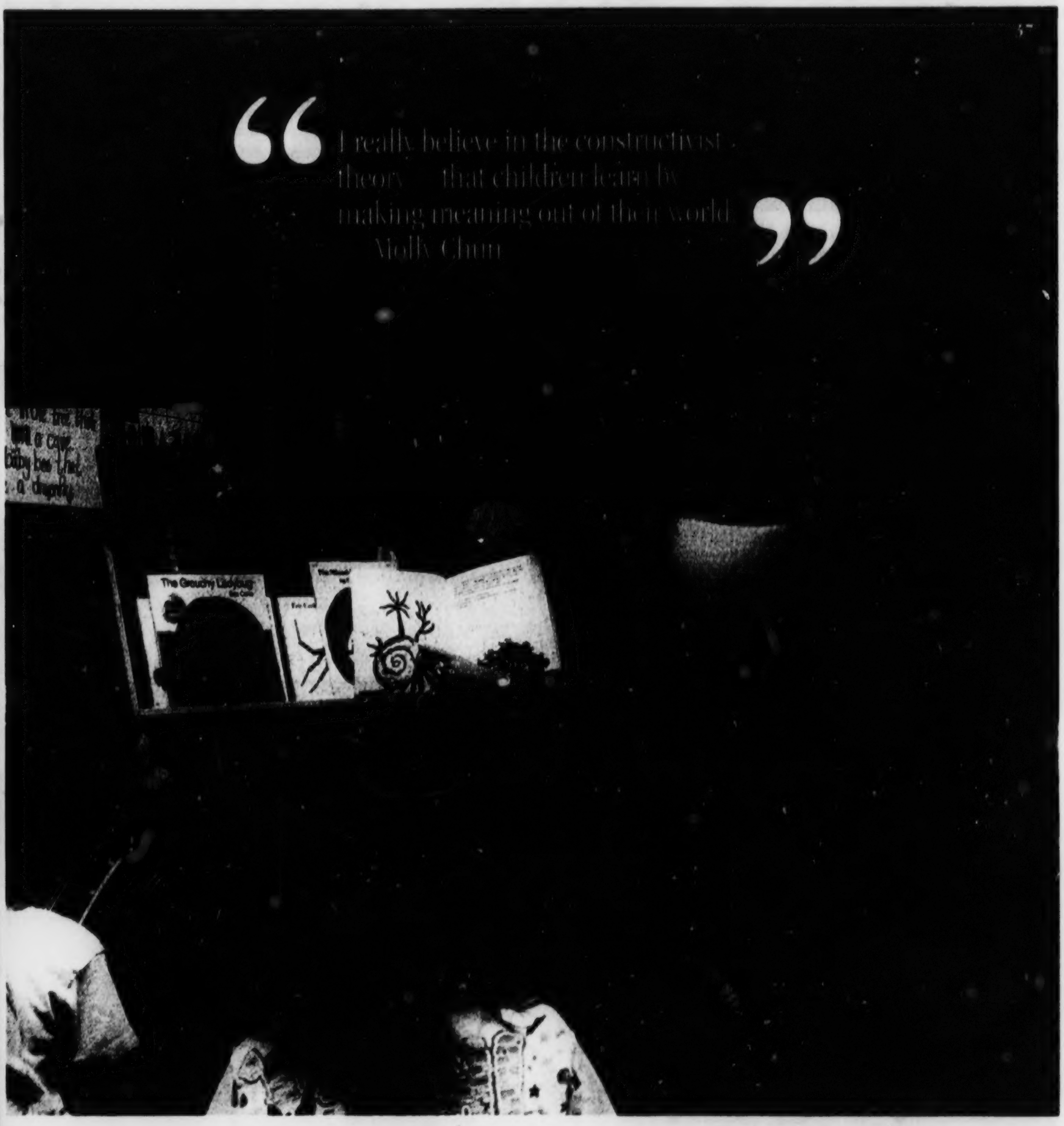
Stephanie's story is called *All About Bats*. It goes like this: "I wonder how bats hang upside down without slipping. Most bats don't bother people. Bats eat fruit and not people."

Christopher titled his book *Counting*. He writes: "I counted 29 red gnats. I counted 17 green vats. I counted 18 blue rats. I counted 10 purple cats. I counted 8 orange hats. I counted 6 yellow mats. I counted 5 black bats."

Levander, who calls his book *I Want to Be*, writes: "I want to be a singer when I grow up. If I get fired, then I want to be a teacher. I will teach fifth grade and do what is right. The end."

When Chun started teaching first grade, she spent a lot of time thinking up prompts for writing. But, she says, "I have found that no prompt works better than a child's own stories that are in their head." Now, she tells them to "write about your life, write about what you're good at, write about what you know." She quotes early-literacy expert Lucy Calkins, who says, "We fall in love with our students when we know their stories."

"Their stories are fabulous," Chun says. "That's what first-grade teaching is all about—listening to their stories." ■


The Grouchy Ladybug
Eric Carle

“I really believe in the constructivist theory — that children learn by making meaning out of their world.”
Molly Chun

CREATING EAGER READERS

Informal assessments help students mine text for **meaning**

By MELISSA STEINEGER

> *"From an instructional standpoint, a test is any situation that affords educators the opportunity to make a decision that might improve instruction."*
>
> —Jerome Harste, 1989

The third-graders at Stevenson Elementary School in Washington dutifully read *Baby Wolf*, a text with all the style and substance of the old Dick-and-Jane primers: See baby wolf. See baby wolf sleep. Yawn, baby wolf, yawn.

It was the young readers who were yawning when Dr. Lesley Thompson jolted them with a story about a sled dog named Cookie and her litter of pups. Thompson, a reading-assessment expert at the Northwest Laboratory, had given the youngsters a chapter titled "Nativity" from Gary Paulsen's book *Puppies, Dogs, and Blue Northers: Reflections on Being Raised by a Pack of Sled Dogs*. The text, written at about a sixth-grade level—three grade levels above their other materials—dramatically describes how Cookie dealt with the death of one of her puppies.

As they responded to Thompson's prompts and queries, the students showed their ability to synthesize what they had read—that is, to see how parts of the story work together to build meaning, noting similarities and differences between the two stories, and finding meaning beyond the texts' literal boundaries. To probing questions such as "How do you know that Cookie was a good mother?" the third-graders eagerly shared their feelings, all the while exploring ideas from the text. Even later, when the official inquiry into the text was over, the students returned to the story during free periods, reread it on their own, and talked about it with their classmates. In explaining the difference between the stories—why Paulsen's narrative captured the young readers so completely—one student replied: "'Nativity' is real to me. *Baby Wolf* is just a story."

These students, who were part of a 1997 pilot project on reading assessment, had become what Thompson calls "engaged readers." Engagement with text—something that research indicates is critical to becoming a good reader—can be fostered in the primary grades by using informal reading assessments, Thompson and other researchers say.

Simply put, informal reading assessments involve understanding an individual reader—his or her strengths, weaknesses, interests, attitudes toward reading—and then using that understanding to help engage the student in reading. The goal is to create readers who challenge themselves to read frequently and who tackle books above their grade level. Eager readers, like the third-graders Thompson worked with, are the end result of effective classroom assessments.

The strength of informal assessments in the overall assessment mix is their ability to give specific clues to a young reader's personal set of strategies for decoding words and gleaning meaning from text, says NWREL researcher and reading specialist Dr. Jane Braunger. These clues give the teacher the insight he or she needs to plan instruction that will move that student further along the reading continuum.

"You want a window to the child's mind," says Braunger. Opening that window, she says, is what informal assessments are all about.

Braunger, coauthor with Dr. Jan Lewis of the 1997 book *Building a Knowledge Base in Reading*, jointly published by NWREL, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the International Reading Association, identifies the key benefits of informal assessments:

- They provide indepth understanding of an individual's development as a reader. This allows a teacher to design instruction to meet the needs and interests of all the individuals in a class, create flexible reading groups that change as skills change, choose reading materials appropriate for the needs of the individuals, and move the individual along his own continuum of reading development.
- They help a teacher see a youngster's background knowledge, motivation to read, and other hard-to-measure elements that have a profound effect on how well a youngster reads.
- They help a teacher link teaching and testing by allowing her to build on students' base of knowledge and skills in designing instruction.

Noted researcher Dr. P. David Pearson of Michigan State University advocates using informal testing, especially in the younger grades. Pearson, author of numerous books on reading, says teachers would use their time better by informally assessing individuals rather than by giving standardized tests to whole classes, particularly in the primary grades where students may not understand directions or may be unable to concentrate for the duration of the test. Teachers will gain the clearest picture of a youngster's reading development, he stresses, by using a variety of assessments rather than relying on any single type of evaluation. (For more of Pearson's views on informal assessments, visit his Web site at http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/cspds/home.htm. Select Works in Progress and then Past Archives to find his essay, "Standards and Assessments: Tools for the Reform of Early Reading Instruction.")

Following are descriptions of three tools—running record, miscue analysis, and cloze procedure—and one task—oral retelling

—that teachers most often use to informally assess students' reading strategies and comprehension assessment. Assessment tools, says Thompson, are, like hammers and wrenches, instruments that are applied in the same way over and over. A task, in contrast, is variable and adaptable to specific needs or settings. Thompson recommends that teachers receive training in the use of these techniques in order to fully realize the benefits they can bring.

Running record

*a cumulative account of selected behavior, as of that of a student noted by a teacher over time.**

The running record of text is a system developed by New Zealand educator Marie Clay and detailed in the 1993 edition of her book, *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*. A running record is the teacher's record of everything the child says when reading a text aloud.

Reading samples are 100 to 200 words, or enough to take the child three to 10 minutes to read. Samples should come from readily available reading materials used within the regular classroom and should be at three levels of difficulty: easy, instructional, and hard.

Easy texts are those children have previously read successfully. Instructional texts have some familiarity for the child, but the reader must problem-solve to read at 90 percent to 94 percent accuracy. A harder text may have been previously introduced or never seen before, and the child will read it at 80 to 89 percent accuracy. These levels of difficulty provide insights into how a young reader orchestrates effective reading (easy text), how a youngster problem-solves reading material (instructional text), and how effective processing breaks down (harder text).

There are several options for recording the information: using a blank sheet of paper, creating a form, or making a duplicate of the text with space between lines. Although running records don't need to be tape recorded, recording may help teachers who are learning the technique to review how well they've captured errors.

Clay offers a shorthand method of capturing the child's reading. It goes like this:

- For every correctly read word, the teacher makes a checkmark.
- If the reader misreads a word, the teacher writes the wrong word over the correct word, like this:

(Child) Spit
(Text) Spot

This is counted as one error.

- If the youngster tries several times to read a word, each attempt is recorded:

(Child) Spit / Splat / Spat
(Text) Spot

This is counted as one error.

- If the teacher must tell the child the word, the teacher records a "T" for told:

(Child) Home ___
(Text) House/ T

This counts as one error.

- If the youngster makes several attempts, eventually getting the word correct, the teacher writes SC for "self-corrected." SC is not an error.
- If a child reads a word that is not in the text, the teacher writes the word and beneath it draws a dash. If the child skips a word, the teacher writes the word and above it draws a dash. Either instance counts as one error.
- If a youngster appeals for help, the teacher writes an "A" for appeal. If the teacher must tell the child the word, the teacher adds a "T" for told. Either situation alone or combined counts as one error.
- If a child gets into a state of confusion, the teacher may intervene by saying, "Try that again," perhaps indicating where the child should start anew. Such an instance is marked as TTA (try that again). If the confusion lasts over several words or a phrase, the teacher brackets the entire portion and counts it as one error.
- Repetition is marked as an R, but is not counted as an error. If the child repeats a phrase, the teacher writes an R and draws an arrow back to where the youngster begins anew. If the child reads the phrase correctly, the entire sequence is marked as SC and is not an error. Sometimes a child will reread text and correct some but not all errors. Any repetitions are not counted as errors, but new or continued misreadings are.
- No error is counted for trials that are eventually successful—for instance, the child who says want/ won't/went for went.
- Other non-errors include reading multiple errors and then going back and self-correcting, broken words (a way for away), and mispronunciation. If there are alternate ways to score, score so that the fewest errors are recorded.

To determine the student's error rate, compare the number of errors with the number of words in the text. A student making 15 errors in a 150-word reading selection has an error rate of one to 10 (one error to 10 words).

To calculate the percentage of accuracy, divide the number of errors by the total number of words in the text. Then subtract that number (the error rate) from 1. In the example above, the student has a 10 percent error rate, hence an accuracy rate of 90 percent. Children who are reading text at the appropriate level should score at 90 percent or higher.

"If there is more than 10 percent of error in the record rate this is a 'hard' text for this child," Clay writes. "When children read a book with less than 90 percent accuracy, it is difficult for them to judge for

The traits of an ***effective reader***

What are the characteristics of a good reader—that is, one who reads critically, deeply, and with comprehension?

Having identified six traits shared by good readers, Dr. Lesley Thompson of the Northwest Laboratory, has developed an assessment strategy for the traits. Every reader falls somewhere on a continuum of progress for each trait, Thompson says. Students may have greater or lesser skill, but they can always be helped when a teacher informally assesses the skill level the student has reached and shapes instruction to further the youngster's development.

The traits, along with examples of advanced accomplishment, follow:

1. **Decoding conventions** of writing, organization, and genre. Advanced students are able to recognize correct grammatical constructions, understand the function of punctuation, and have an awareness of spelling conventions. They can identify the title, author, and components of the text, such as the table of contents and chapter headings. And they can identify the genre.
2. **Establishing comprehension.** Students can state or write a thesis statement; name major and minor examples of the thesis; identify the turning moments with facts and examples; and can connect the turning points to the main thesis.
3. **Realizing context.** Students can use examples from the text to discuss the author's intentions and inferred meanings, both implicit and explicit.
4. **Developing interpretation.** Students can identify problems in texts and resolve them using clues and evidence.
5. **Integrating for synthesis.** Students can connect text with other texts, subjects, and experiences.
6. **Critiquing for evaluation.** Students can, with insight and evidence, critique ideas and perspectives found in the reading.

Resource Notes: The Northwest Laboratory offers three-day workshops on using the six traits to nurture strategic reading and critical thinking in students. For information on upcoming Creating Readers institutes, including an October institute in Cannon Beach, Oregon, and a March institute in Arizona, call the Assessment and Evaluation Program, (503) 275-9535 or 1-800-547-6339, ext. 535.

Also available is a newly published video, which presents the six traits of an effective reader and shows how they can be applied in the classroom. For details and ordering information on *The Journey of a Reader*, call (503) 275-9535.

themselves whether their attempts at a word are good ones or poor ones. They need easier material which they can attempt at a rate of not more than one error in 10 words at the time they begin the new book. For the average child there is movement from 90 percent accuracy when he is first promoted to a book to 95 percent or more as he completes his learning on that book."

A long analysis is not necessary. But a teacher should at least ask what led the child to make the error and use that information as an aid in instruction. More difficult texts will produce higher error rates; with more practice, teachers improve their ability to detect errors—also raising the error rate.

While learning to take a running record may seem complicated, Clay says most teachers need two hours or less to learn the basics. She suggests selecting three average readers as case studies. Try out the procedures on these children, score and analyze the results, and summarize the observations. Some teachers fit running records into their schedules by taking a running record of one child each day—which means each child has a running record every three to four weeks.

Miscue analysis

a formal examination of the use of miscues as the basis for determining the strengths and weaknesses in the background experiences and language skills of students as they read.

A reading miscue inventory and analysis combines aspects of the running record with oral retelling. The inventory is a listing of words a child may substitute when faced with a word that is difficult to pronounce or decode. By analyzing a child's substitutions as the child reads aloud, the teacher can look for specific areas where a reader is having trouble decoding words, phrases, or ideas and later provide the appropriate instruction.

A "miscue" is defined in *The Literacy Dictionary* of the International Reading Association as "a deviation from text during oral reading or a shift in comprehension of a passage." The dictionary adds the important note that "miscues are not random errors, but are attempts by the reader to make sense of the text." For this reason, they "provide a rich source of information for analyzing language and reading development."

The general approach is for the teacher to choose a text of interest to the reader, but one the reader has not read. The piece should form a cohesive whole, whether it is a story, poem, or other text of about 500 words, or enough text to allow for 15 to 30 minutes of reading. Several pieces may be chosen to reach that duration. The piece should be predictable—that is, the reader should be able to provide some meaning without a previous reading—yet be of sufficient difficulty that the reader will make miscues. (If the reader does not miscue, the student has mastered the reading-skill level of the chosen text.)

The teacher marks identical copy that is triple-spaced, but has the same number of words per line and page so that format miscues can be identified. After the child reads the text and the teacher marks the miscues, the reader retells the story orally, without prompting, if possible. When the retelling is finished, the teacher delves more deeply into the story with open-ended questions such as these: "Tell more about (a character named by the student);" "After (an incident mentioned by the student) happened, what came next?" and "Why do you think (a character named by the student) did that?"

Analyzing the miscue inventory and the retelling can provide insight into a child's ability to use context to establish meaning, drive to seek meaning, ability to self-correct, growth in developing fluency, and ability to read with fluency and expression.

Cloze procedure

any of several ways of measuring a person's ability to restore omitted portions of a text by reading its remaining context.

The cloze process can help a teacher assess a student's reading comprehension and mastery of language. Students use clues from the context of the passage to fill in words that have been deliberately omitted. A traditional cloze exercise omits words systematically, say every fifth or 10th word, regardless of the word. But words also can be deleted more selectively, by category. Teachers may wish, for example, to omit verbs, prepositions, or special vocabulary. Research suggests that selective word deletion is more useful in providing clues to teachers than systematic deletions.

LinguaLinks (http://www.sil.org/lingualinks), an electronic resource for language learners and teachers, recommends leaving intact the first two or three sentences of the passage to provide enough context clues for the reader. Here is what a cloze exercise with selected verbs omitted might look like with a passage from "Nativity."

Cookie slept hard, was absolutely sound asleep, and I thought I would take the body now, take it to the house and dispose of it so she could not find it. But when I reached across the hut to get it, her eyes opened and her lips moved to clear teeth, and again she looked directly into my eyes. "I will ____ your sled," she said, "and love you and ____ the team and ____ your life and be loyal to all that you are and ____ you in all things until I cannot, but if you ____ my pup you die." I left the pup and it was not for three days, almost four, when the still-frozen pup was clearly not going to come back to life, that she finally surrendered to her grief and let me take it away.

LinguaLinks offers these guidelines for preparing texts for a cloze procedure:

- Choose texts that provide a lot of clues and supporting information to aid word identification
- Use cloze tests along with other kinds of tests for reading comprehension
- Test the text with a fluent reader before using it
- Use texts at an appropriate reading level for each learner

In reviewing students' completed cloze exercises, Thompson says, teachers should look for complexity and sophistication in the student's word selection, the student's ability to come as close as possible to the original text, the ability to demonstrate literal comprehension of the original passage, and a willingness and desire to create meaning.

Retelling *requires the student to construct a personal text and make inferences both from the original text and prior knowledge.*

Oral retelling measures how well a child understands a text and can help youngsters improve their reading comprehension. This assessment also helps engage children in reading by allowing them to capture the flavor of a piece they've read by using their own language.

"An analysis of the retelling can help teachers identify problems that do not surface when students are simply asked to answer questions," the Oregon Department of Education notes.

Oral retellings are straightforward. Aware that he or she will be retelling the story, the youngster reads a designated text. To help the student along, the teacher may preface the reading with some instruction that will help the child construct a good retelling. She might, for instance, instruct the reader to give a general introduction to the story, describe the main characters, and explain any obstacle the characters must overcome.

Typically, the teacher asks the child to tell the story as if he were telling it to another child who has not read the story. Older readers may retell the story in writing. For any age, teachers may choose to prompt the retelling with questions about the plot, characters, and significant ideas.

To evaluate, the teacher looks for the child's knowledge of the gist of the story and the main ideas; accurate reporting of the events; sequence accuracy; the number and accuracy of direct quotes from the text; the ability to relate information to personal knowledge; the presence of the beginning, middle, and end of the story in the child's retelling; precision of vocabulary; the presence of characters and setting; and the use of detail. This may be recorded on an appropriate scale—say, "low," "moderate," and "high."

Teachers also can probe for understanding by asking the reader to make inferences rather than simply recalling the text. They can invite a personal response to the text which helps young readers extend their ability to connect the text with other texts and experiences.

The teacher can model how to explore a text by making notes of the main ideas of the text, then sharing these with readers. He can invite the readers to identify what the text made them think about, and encourage them to ask questions about things they didn't understand.

Oral retellings also can engage an entire class. Braunger once asked a first-grade class to retell a story, allowing students to relate their favorite passages or events while she wrote down the responses. In an article titled "Retelling: Reading Assessment That's Also Good Instruction" from the *Handbook for Student Performance and Assessment*, a 1996 publication from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Braunger describes how the students were eagerly raising their hands or calling out their favorite parts. When the retelling was over, the entire story had been captured from the classroom full of engaged readers, she says. The experience also provided a model for the students when they later gave individual retellings of other texts.

Research has found that both low- and high-skilled readers have increased comprehension of setting, theme, plot, and resolution after participating in only four retelling sessions. ■

NOTE: Definitions of assessment terminology are from The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing, edited by Theodore Harris and Richard Hodges and published in 1995 by the International Reading Association; and from Reading Assessment: Grades K-4, Third Grade Benchmark, published by the Oregon Department of Education.

More resources

A volunteer gives kids an extra boost in reading

By Teri Sherman Matas

My heart started to pound as I pulled into the parking lot at Kelly Elementary School in southeast Portland on my first day as a reading volunteer. I was asking myself, "What am I doing here? I don't know how to teach children to read. My degree is in graphic design, not education. I don't even have nieces or nephews, let alone kids of my own, who might have given me *some* experience in relating to young children."

But I had made a commitment to the volunteer coordinator, and she was expecting me. I reminded myself what had brought me to Kelly Elementary School that day.

A series of news stories about the extreme difficulties facing some of Oregon's children, and the lack of resources available to help them, had left me asking, "Is there something I can do?" *The Oregonian* had published a list of volunteer opportunities, and that's where I found out about SMART, a book and reading program for children in kindergarten through second grade.

SMART (Start Making a Reader Today) is sponsored by the Oregon Children's Foundation, a nonprofit organization formed in 1991 by former governor Neil Goldschmidt and the law firm of Ater Wynne Hewitt Dodson & Skerritt. The foundation's main focus is to increase early literacy in the belief that early reading success leads to success later in school and in life. The program, which serves students in 13 Oregon counties, focuses on schools that have 40 percent or higher participation in free and reduced-price lunch.

As I walked into the SMART reading room at Kelly that first day, my nervousness was calmed by the bright, cozy atmosphere created by comfy sofas, tables covered with books, stuffed animals, and other cheery decorations. After two years as a volunteer, I still feel a sense of well-being as I walk into that room. I imagine the kids must feel that way, too.

I was relieved to find that the activities necessary to accomplish positive results didn't require extensive training. In fact, I soon realized that a skill I had taken for granted—being able to read—was all I needed in order to contribute something to a child's life.

The goal of the SMART program is simple: to create a relaxed and safe environment in which children can practice their reading skills, one-on-one, with caring adults. I spend one hour each week at Kelly—half an hour with each of two students. I read with the same two students for the whole year.

I start each session by stopping by the child's classroom and walking him or her back to the reading room. Kids in the SMART program (chosen by their teachers because they especially can benefit from extra reading practice and attention) are the envy of the class. Far from carrying a stigma, SMART is viewed as something fun, like being in a club. If the regular SMART student is absent, all the other kids eagerly vie to take her place that day.

The child chooses what she would like to read from the many new, donated books. I might read to her, or she might read to me, depending on the difficulty of the book and what she feels comfortable doing that day.

We often talk about the book and subjects that come up as we read. One day Katerina and I read *Madeline* by Ludwig Bemelmans, a story that takes place in Paris. We got out the globe and found France. Then she wanted to find Russia, the coumty where she was born.

Once each month the kids get to choose a book to take home and keep. This is a way to bring books into homes where resources may be limited. Brothers and sisters can then enjoy them, too.

Each student has different abilities and challenges, which the teacher shares with the volunteer ahead of time. Lindsey, whose home life is unstable, needed to work on her basic alphabet skills. Carlos comes from a home where English is a second language. Nick, who is from a big family, was struggling with basic skills and needed a little extra personal attention.

I have been impressed by the teachers I see. But each child in the full classroom needs so much from the teacher, and teachers—no matter how talented or dedicated—can only spread themselves so thin. It's no wonder that some of the children, especially the quiet and shy ones, don't get all the attention they need to flourish.

Some days I feel encouraged by clear progress and growing bonds of affection with individual students. Other days, they seem bored and distracted. There have been times when I questioned my abilities. But as the weeks and then months go by, feelings of familiarity and trust grow. The students know I'll be back the next week, and that I really care about them. Giving children the sense that they're important, I've realized, is a big benefit of the tutoring program.

By the end of that first school year, Lindsey ran up and threw her arms around me whenever I came to her class to pick her up. And

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BOOK BUDDY

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Carlos paid me a high compliment when he said, "You're a *great* SMART reader!" My self-doubts dissolved.

I read with Nick for two years. When I first met him, he had very few reading skills, and he was extremely quiet. But gradually I learned what he liked to read: *Where's Waldo?*, Dr. Seuss, pop-up books, and anything with dinosaurs. Gradually, his reading improved. Eventually, he was able to read *The Cat in the Hat* aloud all the way through. It took us a few weeks to complete the book, and I was amazed after each week had passed that he remembered exactly where we left off the time before. When we were done, I saw his face light up with surprise and pride when I congratulated him on reading a 60-page book from start to finish.

For the last day of the program, the volunteer coordinator organized a farewell ceremony. The tutors and their students shared punch and cake, then waved goodbye to one another with jumbo-sized bubble wands. Each student was presented with a certificate of achievement. As I walked out to my car after that first year of tutoring, I felt grateful for the opportunity to be one of the many people in my community who are trying to help kids get started in lives that I hope will be happy and successful. Come September, I'll be back in the cozy reading room, confident that I can make a difference for a few kids. ■

NOTE: Students' names have been changed to protect their privacy. For information about SMART, call the Oregon Children's Foundation, (503) 721-7175.

Teri Sherman Matias is a Portland graphic designer.

A [illegible]

Reading [illegible] says Dr. Kay Davis, Director of the [illegible] Community and Education Volunteer Services Center, which [illegible] coordinates a variety of training and outreach activities. For information on the center and its services, call (503) [illegible]

PEACEFUL PROPOSAL

Continued from Page 48

nor, one hopes, by the dictates of school administrators or politicians, but by their ongoing assessment of their students' needs. Where teachers work this way—and parents help by reading and talking to their children and taking them places—there are no reading wars and no nonreaders. ■

Joanne Yatvin, Principal of Cottrell and Bull Run elementary schools in the Oregon Trail School District in Sandy, Oregon, is among 15 members of the National Reading Panel convened in April by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to evaluate research on reading instruction and recommend ways to apply it in the classroom.

PEACEFUL PROPOSAL

"Reading wars" oversimplify the complexity of the process

By Joanne Yatvin

FAR TOO MUCH ENERGY HAS BEEN INVESTED IN FIGHTING THE "READING WARS." If learning to read depended only on using phonics or whole language or some other pure approach, then all children in single-method classrooms would read either well or poorly. School-sponsored testing and research studies do not show anything near such uniform results. Yet, supporters of a particular method claim success when the percentage of children reading at grade level climbs 10 points. That amount of improvement does indicate that something in a classroom is better than it was before, but it also shows that other things are still wrong for a significant number of children.

Righting all wrongs through instruction is impossible because many of those wrongs are environmental or genetic. But as capable teachers prove every day—in all kinds of schools—it is possible for all children to read well enough to succeed in school and life. What works is a broad-based program, personalized by teachers smart enough to give children what they need when they need it. Creating a broad-based reading program starts with the recognition that reading is a mixture of several skills learned and used simultaneously, but not always in the same combinations or strengths. The major skills necessary for reading are:

1. Phonemic awareness—the ability to separate streams of speech into their component sounds

2. Grapho-phonemic correspondence—being able to match written symbols to the speech sounds they represent

3. Word analysis and synthesis—being able to break print words into speech syllables and to blend letter sounds into words

4. Sight-word vocabulary—being able to recall automatically the pronunciation of a large number of print words previously learned

5. Syntactic knowledge—knowing the permissible order and the proper grammatical inflections of words in English sentences

6. Semantic knowledge—understanding the meanings of words alone, combined with other words, and in different contexts

7. Literary knowledge—knowing the common forms, narrative patterns, expressions, and conventions used in different types of literature and factual writing so that one can make reasonable predictions about what will come next when reading a particular type of writing

These are the skills directly involved in decoding written language, but readers also need to be able to transfer their oral language skills—such as emphasizing particular words, phrasing, and voice inflection—to reading. This is difficult for many children because there are few written symbols for guidance. Mastery of one cluster of skills is never enough. A child who has only the phonemic skills pronounces words haltingly, without regard to meaning or the natural rhythms of speech. She does not apprehend the written text as a whole. If, in addition, a child has analysis-synthesis skills and a large sight-word vocabulary, she can read rapidly and smoothly, but still may lack understanding and natural phrasing. Such a child can get by in a display of oral reading because she pronounces all the words right, but she is not yet a true reader. Only the mastery of semantic, syntactic, and oral language skills can make her that. When, finally, she has mastered some of the literary skills, she becomes an accomplished reader, able to handle many kinds of material and to grasp a range of meanings, explicit and implicit, contained in quality texts. Although I have specified "mastery" above, an ironic twist is that being pretty good in all types of skills is better than being perfect in one or two of them.

While some children who have had lots of life, language, and literature experiences before coming to school can figure out and gain control of reading skills on their own, most children need broad-based instruction at school. The problem today is that too many children have been raised on television—without books, enriching experiences, or much adult-child conversation—and too many teachers do not recognize these deficits. They teach the obvious print-speech connections and assume that their students will pick up semantic, syntactic, literary, and oral transfer skills on their own just as students did in the past.

Teaching at its best includes instruction in all types of skills and an awareness of children's background knowledge and stages of development. Good teachers continually examine their students' progress, their own experiences and beliefs, and what is possible in their classrooms. They respect research for its insights and direction, but they are not enslaved by it. When they decide on a teaching method—or, more accurately, a combination of methods—they put all their expertise and effort behind it. As time goes by, they make changes, moved not by fads

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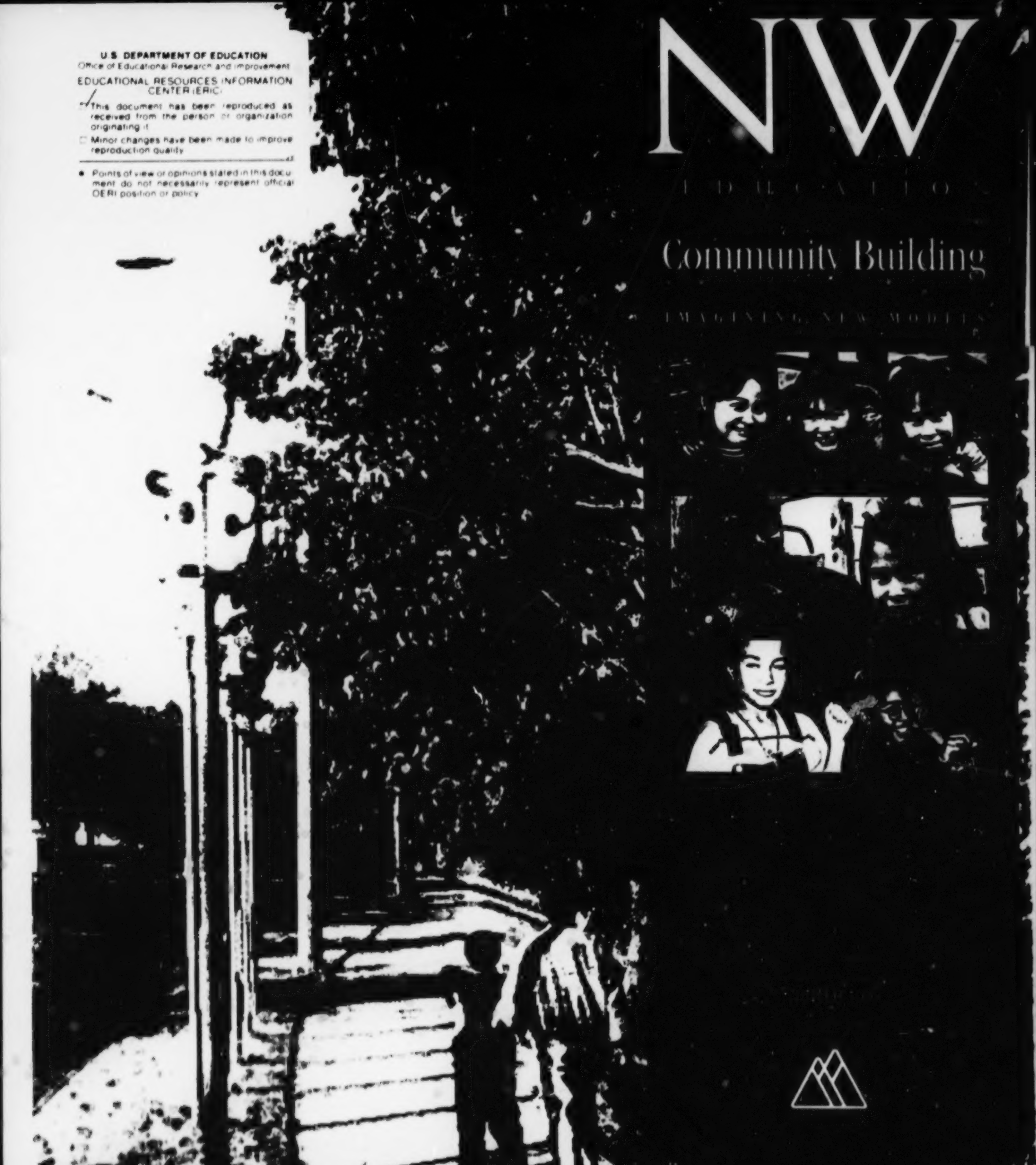
EDUCATION

Community Building

IMAGINING NEW MODELS



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COVER PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE, LEFT TO RIGHT): AN AFTERNOON IN SEATTLE'S SOUTH END. PHOTO BY SUZIE BOSS. STUDENTS FROM QUINHAGAK. PHOTO BY DENISE JARRETT. CROSS-GENERATION LEARNING IN ALASKA. PHOTO BY DENISE JARRETT. SEATTLE YOUTH AT PLAY. PHOTO BY SUZIE BOSS.

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Homing Instinct

CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS REMOVE WALLS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

When writer Paul Gruchow was a boy, he took two years of high school biology. "But I never learned that the beautiful meadow at the bottom of my family's pasture was a remnant virgin prairie," he recounts in *Grass Roots: The Universe of Home*. "We did not spend, as far as I can remember, a single hour on the prairie—the landscape in which we were immersed."

Nor did he learn, until long after he'd moved away, that his town's leading banker was also a botanist. "I can only imagine now what it might have meant to me—a studious boy with a love of nature—to know that a great scholar of natural history had made a full and satisfying life in my town. Nothing in my education prepared me to be interested in my own place. If I hoped to amount to anything, I understood, I had better take the first road out of town as fast as I could. And, like so many of my classmates, I did."

Hearing his story, I can't help but wonder where my oldest son's future will take him. This fall I helped Dan pack up his stuff and move into a college dorm, hundreds of miles away from the Cascade peaks that have watched over his first 18 years of life. It was an exciting rite of passage [illegible] of us. But driving [illegible] in an empty [illegible] myself wondering [illegible] road ahead. Will [illegible] to Oregon, eventually? We'll see. In the meantime, I know he has a good [illegible] place he's left behind. [illegible] door School and [illegible] camps and family [illegible] have grounded him. Wherever his dreams may take him, he'll know the feel of *home* beneath his feet.

Across the Northwest, [illegible] schools are finding compelling reasons to teach young people not only about the geography of home, but also about the threads that hold our communities together. They're immersing students in the kind of education that only happens if the walls between schools and communities come tumbling down.

This issue of *Northwest Education* takes a look at [illegible] are loosely [illegible] community [illegible]. These new [illegible] take many [illegible] many pur- [illegible] academic enrich- [illegible] economic develop- [illegible] delivery of [illegible]. But they grow [illegible] that's as old as [illegible] itself: Communi- [illegible] places where people [illegible] one another. And in [illegible] communities, schools [illegible] center stage. [illegible] of the remarkable [illegible] featured in this [illegible] take place in communi- [illegible] that are struggling. In dis- [illegible] rural areas and impov- erished inner cities, citizens aren't waiting for experts to ride into town and fix what ails them. Instead, they're using their own talents and initiative to reweave the threads of their communities. In the process, they're creating a lifeline strong enough to pull themselves, their children, and their communities into the next century.

—*Suzie Boss*

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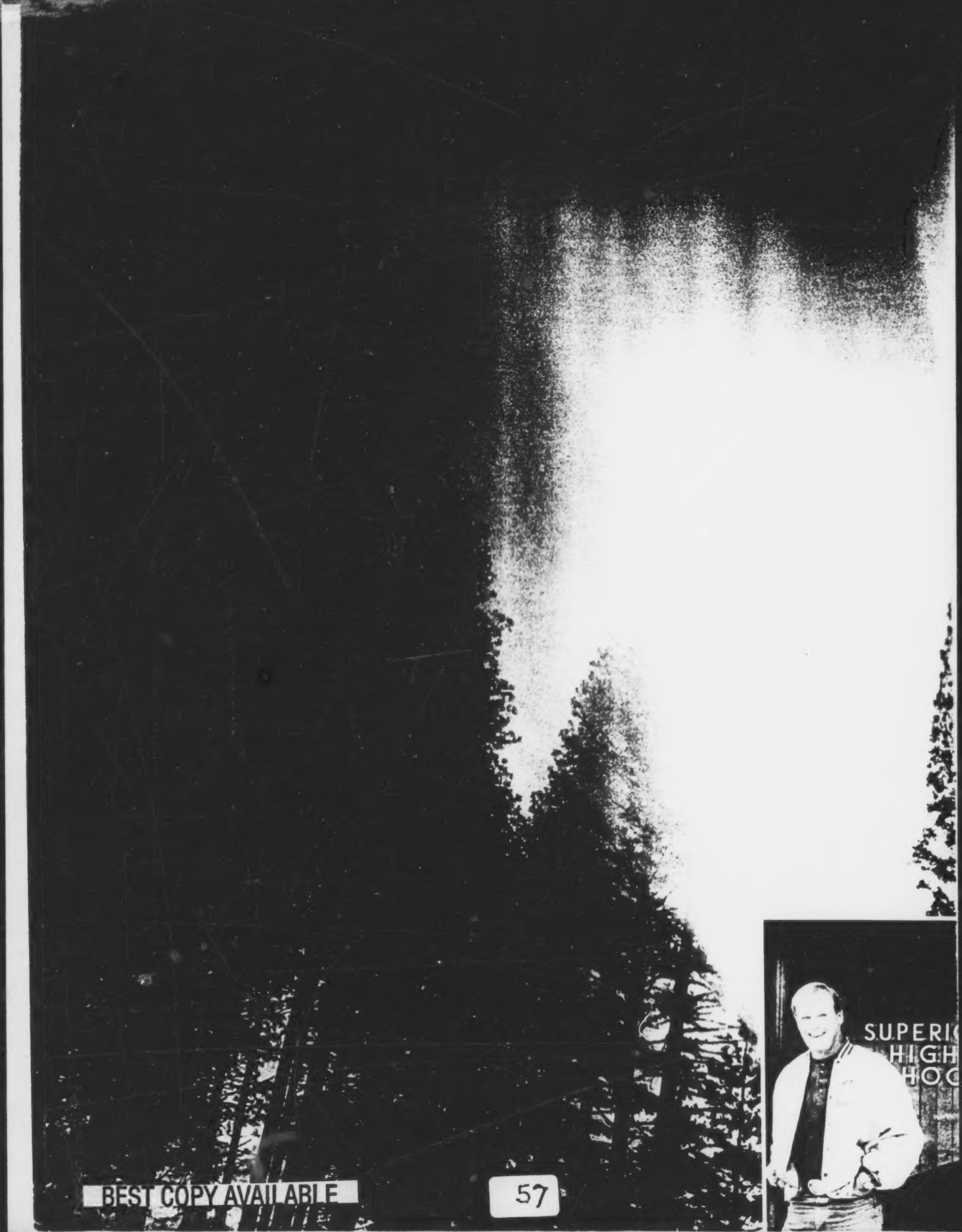
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THE WISDOM OF WORKING TOGETHER

By SUZIE BOSS

Look in any direction from [illegible] and you'll see mountains and trees. Lots of trees. We're an island surrounded by forest," says Gordon Hendrick, the 49-year-old mayor of this community of 1,000. There's a river running through the heart of Superior, too, and an interstate highway that winds through the passes to Missoula, about 60 miles away. Since the town was founded a century ago, young people growing up in Superior have looked to those trees for their future. The local mill could be counted on to feed families and generate a tax base to support the town's high school, junior high, and elementary school.

But in 1994, a year after Hendrick was elected to his first term as mayor, the mill closed its doors. It had become more cost effective to ship raw logs overseas for processing. Overnight, Superior was sucked into a downward spiral that's familiar to many rural areas dependent on a single natural resource. Property values plummeted. Unemployment shot up. The local tax base shrank. Schools had to lay off teachers. Some families packed up and moved on to other places where trees would still [illegible]. Many of those who have stayed, says the mayor, have been left feeling "as if the world has let them down."

Clearly, Hendrick has his work cut out for him. "How are we going to keep this community energized," he asks himself regularly, "so that we can convince people to stay here? To start new businesses here? So young people won't have to leave town to find jobs?"

Those are hard questions, and they're being asked in other distressed communities all across the country. From Oakland to Chicago, from the dairy farms of Tillamook to the cattle country of eastern Washington, communities are looking for local solutions to problems that may have originated halfway around the globe. "Who would have thought," Hendrick says, "that the labor market in Asia would affect people in a little town like Superior?"

Instead of wringing his hands in despair, Hendrick is throwing his energy into a new partnership that he hopes will pave the way to a better future. Most days, this small-town mayor can be found at Superior High School where he volunteers his time and expertise to coordinate a thriving school-to-work program. His goal is to link students with real-world employers in health care, social service, banking, and a variety of small businesses. He wants to open their eyes to career options outside of forestry, and make sure they have the education to make new dreams possible. Employers, in turn, have a chance to see that this new generation is a capable, committed workforce with flexible job skills—just the kind of employees they'll need to build a sustainable future in Superior, where money no longer grows on trees.

Although folks in Superior sometimes feel isolated from the outside world, they're actually part of a grassroots movement that's gaining momentum across the country. In some of the nation's most economically challenged neighborhoods, both urban and rural, new partnerships and alliances are forming that blur old boundaries between school, family, jobs, and community. Instead of pushing separate agendas—more jobs, better schools, less crime, improved health care—community members are rallying around the wisdom of working together. Educators, civic leaders, local employers, entrepreneurs, parents, and all the people who make a community their home are beginning to see that collaboration can be in everyone's best interest.

Hundreds of miles away from Superior, for instance, residents in one of the nation's poorest urban neighborhoods are living proof of the benefits of partnership. At the start of this decade, Sandtown, a 72-square-block area in Baltimore, was a textbook example of urban decay. Like many other American cities, Baltimore had lost the industrial jobs that once sustained middle-income families. When workers followed jobs to the suburbs, informal networks of friends and kin fell apart. Those left behind found themselves left out of the mainstream, lacking role models, and, often, feeling hopeless about their ability to change their situation.

In the early 1990s, 40 percent of Sandtown's residents lacked high school diplomas and half had annual incomes less than $10,000. The community was riddled with crime, drugs, dilapidated housing projects, vacant lots, and schools that didn't work.

But during the last eight years, Sandtown has been rebuilt and revived from the inside out. Local residents, with the help of experts and a strong push from church leaders, have invented better ways to deliver education, job skills, health care, housing—all the diverse elements that function "to support life instead of degrading it," according to Kurt Schmoke, the visionary Baltimore mayor who helped guide Sandtown to real, lasting renewal. Many of the new efforts aim at getting young people better educated and more engaged in improving the community. Writing about this community revitalization in

The Washington Post, Schmoke said, "Sandtown is the shape of urban policy to come—a community built through a partnership of residents, religious organizations, the Enterprise Foundation, and all the levels of government."

From Superior to Sandtown, and all the places in between, there's new energy in conversations about what sustains and defines communities. Some advocates call this movement "community building," while others refer to "school-linked strategies" or "school-community partnerships." It's not a concept that's owned by any one branch of academics. Instead, researchers from fields ranging from education to economics to sociology are taking notes and, when asked, providing local communities with expertise to get them started on the path to partnership.

So far, experts agree that no one approach works for every community. Multiple strategies are being used, often simultaneously, to meet educational and community development goals. Success is being measured not with charts and graphs, but in stories about community revival, collaborative problem solving, and a deepening sense of place among people who share both geography and values.

According to *Community Building Coming of Age*, a monograph which grew out of a series of seminars on community building and has been published online by the National Community Building Network (NCBN), this renewed sense of partnership offers tangible rewards. Neighbors learn to rely on each other by working together on concrete tasks that take advantage of their collective and individual assets. In the process, they create "human, family, and social capital that provides a new base for a more promising future and reconnection to America's mainstream."

Comprehensive school-linked strategies share a number of elements, no matter how different the communities involved, the issues being addressed, or the particular model being implemented. *Putting the Pieces Together*, published by the U.S. Department of Education and the Regional Educational Laboratory Network, reports that comprehensive strategies:

- Help children, parents, and families by building community resources and relationships
- Help children, parents, and families solve immediate problems and develop the capacity to avoid crises
- Build collaboration among all of the community's major groups and cultures, including parents, churches, and a range of agencies and organizations in addition to schools
- Involve multiple stakeholders in all stages of program planning, design, and implementation
- Communicate in languages that are accessible to all partners
- Flow from a shared vision about improving long-term conditions for children, families, and communities—not simply a goal of providing services or treating a problem

Even in the most distressed neighborhoods, the primary aim of collaboration is not simply giving more money, services, or other material benefits to the poor. Rather, the goal is "to obliterate feelings of dependency and to replace them with attitudes of self-reliance, self-confidence, and responsibility," according to the *Coming of Age* authors.

IMAGINING NEW MODELS

In many of these new partnerships, local schools play a leading role. That's not surprising. For decades, schools have helped to define and unite their neighborhoods. In addition to providing basic education, schools transmit values from one generation to the next. They prepare young people to take their place in the job market and to shoulder their share of civic responsibilities. Improving education is a goal that can bring parents together and mobilize neighbors

6 around a common cause.

Since the 19th century, schools have served as the cultural center of rural life, according to Bruce Miller, a former senior research associate at NWREL who has written extensively on rural education. Rural schools give community members a central meeting place and regular opportunities to get together. In many rural areas, the school continues to be the strongest—and sometimes the only—community institution. In cities and suburbs, as well, schools still provide a place for neighbors to meet and greet.

Yet, according to a study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, many schools have become "seriously isolated" from their communities. Urbanization, school consolidations, and a more transient society all share the blame, according to Larry Decker and Mary Richardson Boo. In *Community Schools: Linking Home, School, and Community* they write, "Since most public schools offer nothing to adults without children, it should not be surprising that many adults are unenthusiastic about supporting public education." Adults who had negative experiences with schools when they were young may feel reluctant to become involved with their children's classes. As a solution, Carnegie researchers urge the development of "exceptionally strong ties" between home, school, and community.

Imagining what these new school-community partnerships might look like raises important questions about the role and shape of public education. Should the school become a center for the whole community, delivering education for all ages? If teachers sense that children are not succeeding academically because of issues related to health care, hunger, or housing, should schools be delivering social services along with classroom lessons? Would students be more engaged in learning if they were actively engaged outside the classroom walls, mastering life skills while contributing to the life of the community? If economic issues are paramount to community survival, should schools act as springboards for entrepreneurship, using students' fledgling skills and youthful energy to incubate small businesses?

Research shows that all of these interrelated approaches can revitalize communities and improve academic achievement. Rather than being something that takes place between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., between the ages of five and 18, and within the four walls of the classroom, learning can be reinvented as an activity that engages, defines, unites, and revives the whole community. Miller offers three interrelated models of how schools and communities can intersect:

SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY CENTER. In this first model, the school becomes a resource for lifelong learning and a vehicle for delivering a wide range of services throughout the community.

For example, schools might become involved in retraining dislocated workers. School computer labs, idle after the last bell of the day, can be used in the evenings to teach technical skills and connect local families to the information highway. Community schools can also act as resource centers, bringing a variety of social services under one accessible roof and teaching families how to make use of resources. They may stay open into the evening and throughout the year. San Francisco, for instance, operates three "Beacon Schools," open year-round to strengthen families and foster positive youth development.

COMMUNITY AS CLASSROOM. In the second model, the traditional classroom walls come down. Students use the entire community as their living laboratory. They may contribute to the life of the community through service projects. They may generate information for community development by conducting surveys or gathering oral histories. Through personal interactions with their adult community members, on their home turf, they gain a deeper understanding of, and psychological connection to, the place they call home.

SCHOOL-BASED ENTERPRISE. In the third model, the school becomes a springboard for local entrepreneurship and business development. Students identify potential service needs and establish a business, such as a day-care center for working families or a shoe-repair shop in a community that doesn't have one, Miller explains. Comprehensive school-based enterprises provide students with supporting curriculum and training.

In one community, for instance, students took a fresh look at the resources available locally. An inventory of vacant lots turned up enough discarded wood to launch a student-run business selling firewood. Operating the business meant learning all the lessons, from budgeting to transportation to accounting, that go along with any small enterprise.

Using these three interrelated models to create "learning communities" can change the culture of a school and the surrounding community. Researchers report that teachers feel less frustration when they can draw on a community of support to remove barriers to learning. Families and community members begin to relate to the school and its staff with more respect and openness.

Although such collaborations are relatively new, acknowledges Dennis Shirley in *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*, "encouraging results are there, measured in increased student attendance, improved teacher retention, enhanced academic achievement, and new forms of school innovation and community uplift."

Collaborative learning communities may differ in design, but generally, according to *Why Should Schools Be Learning Communities?*, published by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, they:

- Help students see links between school and the rest of their lives
- Increase parent and community dedication to schools
- Improve coordination among schools and other social service agencies
- Provide stimulating educational opportunities across the life span

HOW RELATIONSHIPS DEFINE A PLACE

How do successful community-school partnerships get started? Often, the seeds are sown in a conversation between neighbors. Why do we live where we live? What do we mean by community? What could we do to make things better for ourselves and our children? Whether that conversation takes place in informal settings or organized community forums, it means that neighbors have acknowledged their shared interest in the place they call home. They have a relationship. A true school community, points out Primus Mootry in an essay, "Schools as the Hub of the Network," is a place where people "have an ongoing conversation … more like a family than a bureaucratic system."

Increasingly, researchers are paying attention to the importance of relationships that naturally exist within all communities, including those that are struggling. Diane Dorfman, in the *Building Partnerships Workbook* published by NWREL, defines a community not solely as a geographic place, but also by "the relationships in which people interact on an everyday basis." When people share values and interests at local sporting events, over coffee, or even in brief encounters while shopping for groceries, those casual, everyday interactions "allow a community to develop strong bonds and a high level of trust among individuals," asserts Dorfman.

In *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*, Shirley explains why "social capital" is becoming such a key concept in community development. Unlike physical capital, which describes the value of buildings and infrastructure, or financial capital, which describes the value of money, *social capital* proposes that certain kinds of relationships possess economic value, Shirley explains. These ties can be formal, as in the case of labor unions or Boy Scout troops, or informal, such as neighbors who get together for a block party or small business owners who watch out for neighborhood kids after school.

The relationships most likely to build social capital and advance community development, according to Dorfman, are those that pull people out of familiar roles, such as parent-to-teacher, or employee-to-employer. In active relationships, she explains, parent and teacher leave their usual roles and meet as neighbors, friends, or members of a community development project. They go beyond their familiar roles to work together.

FINDING A COMMUNITY'S ASSETS

In *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, John Kretzmann and John McKnight outline a plan for improving conditions in even the most devastated neighborhoods by finding and mobilizing a community's strengths. Their vision is an about-face from the old welfare state, in which "needy" people have relied on outside experts or institutions to solve their problems. Kretzmann and McKnight believe that individuals are held back if they "see themselves as people with special needs that can only be met by outsiders. They become consumers of services, with no incentive to be producers."

Instead of seeing distressed neighborhoods as places with unmet needs aching for services, these researchers from Northwestern University outline a program for developing local capacities. "Each time a person uses his or her capacity," they assert, "the community is stronger and the person more powerful."

John Morefield, a former Seattle elementary school principal and board member of a community coalition called Powerful Schools, points out the critical difference between seeing people as "needy" and as "needed." Building community partnerships, he explains in an essay called "Recreating Schools for All Children," means starting with the premise "that everyone has something to give others," no matter how poor the neighborhood. "Everyone is needed by someone. Many people who learn how to be needy seldom, if ever, experience the power of being needed."

How can a community go about identifying the abilities and gifts of its members? Kretzmann and McKnight describe an approach they call "asset mapping." Although their work focuses primarily on urban areas, NWREL's Rural Education program has been using a similar approach for developing the local capacity of rural communities.

An asset map is an inventory of the gifts, skills, and capacities of all the citizens who make up a community, whether it's an urban pocket of Chicago or a farming community in rural Idaho. Especially in places where economic forces have left citizens feeling marginalized or without worth, asset mapping reminds them that they have skills to offer, that their opinions matter to the community, that they are not *needy*, but *needed*.

Mapping a community's assets involves taking stock of all the relationships within a community. Informal citizen groups are as valuable for community-building as are the more formal institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and chambers of commerce.

Thinking about communities in this way requires seeing people differently. None of us, after all, plays just one role in life. Finding local assets means asking one another, What is it we're good at? What are we willing to give to each other? What would we appreciate receiving back? What do we care about?

GETTING STARTED

How can a community create the kinds of partnerships and active relationships that will bring about lasting benefits? More traditional community improvement efforts have tended to be long on process: A planning phase is followed by an implementation phase. Goals and objectives are written and rewritten.

This approach may be too slow. Staff involved in NWREL's rural leadership development effort have found what community developers in larger cities have also discovered. Initial planning shouldn't take too long. Concrete projects that engage community members also help build relationships that, in turn, build local capacity.

In the rural Washington community of North Franklin, for example, one of the NWREL pilot sites, citizens seemed to be getting frustrated during the early stages of the project. They complained about spending too much time in community meetings. They wanted to get started on something concrete, something to do *now*. Unexpectedly, a group of local cattlemen came to a community meeting looking for partners to help them build a livestock arena for local youth. This turned out to be a watershed event for the community. Here was an active association of folks who hadn't really been identified as a local resource. Yet, they were eager to link up with others in the community and do something positive and tangible to benefit young people. This effort to build partnership helped lead to a new collaborative organization called Partners for Achieving Community Excellence (PACE).

Because partnerships involve new ways of working and relating in a community, they can provoke controversy. Some community members may think that such programs dilute the primary instructional mission of schools, according to the ***Putting the Pieces Together*** guidebook. Similarly, teachers who see collaborations as "one more thing" that they have to do may understandably feel overwhelmed. Keeping schools open for longer hours, as community centers, may leave educators feeling as if their turf has been invaded. If students are participating in extended learning projects, they may draw criticism from community members unaccustomed to seeing young people out and about during the school day.

Good communication can ease the way to building lasting partnerships that make sense to everyone in a community. In *Putting the Pieces Together*, these proactive efforts are recommended to smooth the way for lasting, productive partnerships:

- **Reach out to your critics,** by inviting them to see a new program, listening to their concerns, and providing opportunities for them to contribute
- **Develop good written communication,** such as a low-cost newsletter, widely distributed throughout the community
- **Keep participants and local leaders well informed** by hosting an open house or site visits
- **Share the bottom line** to show that collaborative programs are cost effective and get results ■

Online resources: *Community Building Coming of Age* (www.ncbn.org/directory/docs/comeage2.html); *Putting the Pieces Together: Comprehensive School-Linked Strategies for Children and Families* (www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/css/ppt/putting.htm); ***Community Schools: Linking Home, School, and Community*** (eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/community/community_schools)

NO GHOST TOWN HERE

IN THE BIG BOTTOM, LIFE IS A LESSON THAT NEVER ENDS.

By Lee Sherman

[illegible] Gaut (center) says it's a "privilege" to clean mossy headstones at Silvercreek pioneer cemetery with classmates Annie Wilson and Natasha Lee.

RANDLE, WASHINGTON— THE SILENCE OF THE CEMETERY IS BROKEN ONLY BY THIS: THE RASP OF A RAVEN. THE CHIRP OF A CRICKET. THE WHISPER OF A SILVERY PINWHEEL SPINNING ON A GRAVE. HERE, IN THIS QUIET CLEARING CARVED FROM A DARK FOREST, LIVES THE HISTORY OF A COMMUNITY.

Graves older than 100 years mark the passing of early settlers, some with descendants still dwelling beside the Cowlitz River in this valley called the Big Bottom. The cemetery known as Silvercreek is well tended. The trees are pruned, the grass is cut. But bird droppings mar many of the marble markers. Moss and lichen have taken hold in the dates and names engraved in the 687 headstones—names like McCain and McMahan, Zabotel and Blankenship, names as familiar to longtime residents as Rainier and Adams, Baker and St. Helens, the Cascade mountains that surround them.

Just a few yards down the road from Silvercreek, the students of White Pass High School are collecting scrub brushes and tub-and-tile cleaner for a task of honor and respect: cleaning the headstones of their ancestors. A fax from Centralia Monument has arrived in the school office, suggesting the best cleaning products and warning against working on hot days when the stones can be easily damaged.

"It's a privilege to be involved in this project," says Sunny Gaut, the senior who's organizing the clean-up for her leadership class. Gaut, born and raised in the valley, has parents who graduated from White Pass High and make their livelihood from the two top industries in the Big Bottom: timber and tourism. Her dad, a millwright at Cowlitz Stud Company, escaped last year's downsizing, which dropped half the labor force from the mills in Randle and the neighboring communities of Morton and Packwood. Her mom, a potter who mixes Mount St. Helens ash into her ceramics, has seen her business decline as the volcano's devastation passes into history. Her once-thriving shop has closed, and she now sells her pottery on consignment to other local merchants.

The Big Bottom valley is hurting. Twenty years ago, there were four mills in little Randle alone. Now there's one. "Economically, it's bleak," says Rick Anthony, Superintendent of White Pass School District. At least a quarter of the district's 900 students have a parent who lost a mill job last year, he says.

"You look at that statistic," Anthony explains, "and you say, 'Well, that's a fair chunk, but it's not *humongous*.' But the trouble is, there are so many ancillary jobs. If millworkers get laid off and move or don't spend their money, a lot of mom-and-pop businesses dry up. Those people have kids in the school system, too."

If Anthony has anything to say about it, the 300 lost jobs will amount to only a temporary setback, not one that will shake the foundations of life in the Big Bottom. That's because he sees the families in Randle, Packwood, and Glenoma—the three unincorporated clusters of homes and small businesses that form the heart of the district—as members of a community. For Anthony, community means more than just a common address. It means enduring bonds of place and purpose. Tough economic times can fray, but not break, the ties of a true community, he believes.

At the center of this community is the school district. Anthony and a committed faculty are unwinding strand after strand of collaboration, invitation, and innovation throughout the valley. Their hope is to create a solid network of linkages from one village to another, one generation to another, one person to another. It will be this network, Anthony believes, that will keep White Pass strong until the economy rebounds. No ghost town, no sorry victim of the logging crisis, here.

BIG BOTTOM

The Big Bottom valley wends through the million-acre Gifford Pinchot National Forest, following the fast, milky waters of the glacier-fed Cowlitz River. Rimmed by the white-capped mountains of Rainier and Baker to the north, St. Helens to the west, and Adams to the east, the valley is wild but not isolated, playing host to thousands of skiers, hikers, anglers, and boaters.

Building trails in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest gives students a better sense of the place they call home.

On wet days, mist hangs in the saw-scarred hills like smoke from ancient campfires. At Cowlitz Stud and Packwood Lumber Company, the mist mingles with plumes of steam pouring from the mills, owned and operated by Pacific Lumber and Shipping. Despite the slowdown in logging, trucks loaded with lumber and raw logs continuously roar up and down Highway 12, the road that links Big Bottom villages with the outside world.

Yellow buses, too, rumble along the densely wooded roads leading to the elementary schools in Randle, Glenoma, and Packwood, and to the joint middle and high schools that serve all three villages. Some students ride more than an hour each way in this sprawling district, which stretches across 650 square miles of forest land.

In a very real sense, White Pass Junior-Senior High School forms a nucleus for families scattered throughout the valley. By day, the cinder block building holds children learning to read, write, and compute. By night, the school doors are open wide. Local businesspeople learn computer skills from community college staff. Square dancers do-si-do. A new darkroom funded by a grant from Kodak draws local photographers as well as students. Literacy classes for displaced workers will begin soon. Anthony envisions a time when local businesses and civic groups will hold videoconferences and meetings at the school.

"I want this to be a total community learning center," Anthony says. "I want the whole community to feel that they are welcome, that this is their school, not just the kids' school."

"We don't just teach class during the school year, during the school day," says teacher Anita Jinks, who leads a work-based learning seminar at the high school. "We teach all learners in the community, adults as well as children, and we teach them year-round."

The White Pass school-community connection, however, is not confined to the schoolhouse. Nor does it flow only one direction. Sprucing up headstones—a project of English teacher Kathy Simonis' leadership class—is one of the ways students give to their community. The leadership students also clean up graffiti. They serve Christmas dinner at the senior center. And they collect, haul, and sort food for the local food bank. It was three years ago that students started volunteering at the food bank as "a way to get out of class," Simonis admits. But that attitude turned around fast.

"The ladies at the food bank would reward the kids with treats," Simonis recalls. "The kids would come back to school with cookies and cupcakes. A lot of these kids come from homes where there are no cupcakes. The kids started taking ownership of the project, and pretty soon, we saw changes in classroom behavior."

"It has been my experience," Anthony asserts, "that most of the time, schools only ask for help from the community, as opposed to the other direction. Our approach is to ask not only what the community can do for the school, but also what the school can contribute to the community."

That two-way pipeline between school and community is the centerpiece of the district's ambitious strategic plan, launched four years ago when Anthony arrived at White Pass. The Northwest Laboratory and the Washington State School Directors' Association have provided support and assistance in that planning process. As one piece of the plan, the district brainstormed a list of every enterprise and entrepreneur in the Big Bottom, including civic groups, businesses, churches, elders, and community leaders—a process researchers John Kretzmann and John McKnight call "asset mapping" (see Page 8). The list was long and eclectic. Besides the obvious businesses and agencies—the mills, the ranger stations, the restaurants and motels—there were cottage industries, craftspeople, and old people with a lifetime of memories. There were doctors, pastors, and farmers. There was a poet and a stone mason, an artist and a carpenter, a local historian and a wood carver. The district is creating a database to store this wealth of local resource information.

About the same time, a Forest Service worker, a minister, a community leader, and a teacher were huddling, hatching an idea. President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan called on the Forest Service to reach out to local people and to provide education and training in forest management and practices. To help meet that mandate, the foursome—Margaret McHugh of the Forest Service, the Rev. Dennis Dagener of the United Methodist Church, Doug Hayden of White Pass Community Services, and district school-to-work coordinator Betty Klattenhoff—pulled together funds from a state agency (the Department of Social and Health Services) and a federal program (the Job Training Partnership Act) to create a summer job program and real-life learning lab for high school kids. To help them design and run the program, they recruited a social scientist from the Pacific Northwest Research Station—the Forest Service's research arm for the region—and a pair of graduate students from the University of Washington College of Forest Resources. The research station also kicked in some money.

The program they dubbed Discovery Team has evolved into a "learning-and-earning" experience with three parts: a week of employability skills training; a week of research into local history and economy; and a week of work in the woods. The two dozen participating students go home with $500 in their pocket, blisters on their hands, and (the creators hope) a better grasp of this place on the planet they call home. Equipped with notebooks, tape recorders, and cameras, the Discovery Team has delved into old school records and historical archives. They've interviewed elders and business owners. They've searched the Internet and scoured the library. Topics the kids have explored include:

Mika Maloney designed a questionnaire to survey fellow students on work-related attitudes

Science teacher John Mullenix helps a student measure river pebbles.

WASHINGTON FOREST HISTORY—

Students traced a succession of forest dwellers and users, including native tribes that used the trees for practical and ornamental items such as tepees, canoes, masks, and spears; White homesteaders and fortune seekers; early foresters and environmentalists; and tree farmers with tracts of timberland in production for future cutting.

HISTORY OF THE YAKAMA AND COWLITZ INDIANS—

Students interviewed elders of the Cowlitz and Yakama tribes native to the White Pass area. Besides learning colorful details of tribal religion, customs, and traditions, the students heard stories of hardship and injustice, such as the forced enrollment of Indian children in boarding schools. Always returning to the theme of the forest, the students reported on the Indians' medicinal use of native plants, such as Douglas fir and huckleberry (for fighting infection), skunk cabbage (for headache relief), thimbleberry (to prevent scarring), and wild rose (to relieve sore throat).

SPECIAL FOREST PRODUCTS—

Trees are far from the only moneymaking product of the Gifford Pinchot. Local ranger stations issue thousands of permits for gathering and picking such natural bounty as wild huckleberries, matsutake mushrooms, and bear grass (used for basket weaving).

LOGGING TECHNOLOGY—

Relying on both written records of logging history and interviews with longtime residents, students traced the evolution of logging practices and equipment, from the days of "steam donkeys" and two-man bucksaws called "misery whips" to modern-day loaders and skidders. "Many thanks to Bud and Betty Panco for their expertise, stories, and pictures of a time existing in the memories of a few," the students wrote in their final report.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF LOGGING—

Students explored such controversial and emotional issues as clearcutting, reforestation, stream pollution, soil erosion, wildlife habitat, and forest regulation. They interviewed a hydrologist, a mill manager, a timber sales expert, and a silviculturist, among others.

The thick notebooks that document each summer's findings focus a high-powered lens on the community. Paging through these collections of students' words and photos is like stepping inside the community's collective memory and shared history, peopled with a colorful cast of local characters: Richard and Donna Hagen, who were evacuated from their home by rowboat during the big flood of 1996. Joyce King, original owner of the Tower Rock Trading Post, who lives in a hot-pink trailer in the forest near the Cispus River. Mary Kiona, a Yakama Indian, who regularly rode into Randle on horseback, a white bandana on her head, to trade and barter her handmade baskets, hides, and moccasins. Marty Fortin, Director of the Cispus Environmental Learning Center, who, with 100 kids and 30 adults, was stranded at the center for three nights during the big flood.

These stories, and those of elders like 80-year-old Hank Young—who still has his first-grade report card from Randle School—are recorded in the pages of the Discovery Team notebooks. Their actual voices were preserved, too. Students taped oral histories of Young and others whose family trees reach into the timbered hills of the Gifford Pinchot. The recorded memories are being edited for a documentary by the East Lewis County Historical Society.

WORKING OUTSIDE THE WOODS

[illegible]

"When we turned those kids loose, it was awesome," says Roger Clark, the Forest Service social scientist who helped develop the Discovery Team concept and design a survey of community strengths, needs, and resources. Too often, Clark says, social scientists look at people and analyze them, instead of working with them. Community suspicion about Forest Service motives gave way to cooperation when Clark and his colleagues realized that their job was not to observe the community from an outsiders' perspective, but to help the community discover and better understand itself.

"We tapped into a huge reservoir of talent and energy," Clark recalls. "That's the real notion of partnership."

Discovery Team is an experiment in "social learning," says White Pass teacher and lifelong resident Gail Mullins, who supervises the summer teams. Because social learning is open ended, students and teachers should anticipate and tolerate ambiguity, Mullins says. She quotes David Korten, founder of the People-Centered Development Forum, who describes social learning as "a messy, even chaotic process in which error and unpredicted outcomes are routine." Social learning depends, Mullins says, on local initiative and control (as opposed to letting outside "experts" take the lead).

In Discovery Team, learning also depends on student (versus teacher) initiative. With teachers guiding rather than dictating, students have broad latitude in topic choice, research procedures, and presentation format.

To launch the Discovery Team in 1995, the students held a public forum, sending invitations to key community members identified in the district's strategic planning process. Up and down the valley, residents answered "yes" to the question, Are you willing to talk with students and tell them what you know about the history, economy, and environment of the Big Bottom? In four years, only two residents have turned students away.

"If we reach out and ask, they're there for us," says school-community liaison Betty Klattenhoff ("Betty K" to the locals), a district leader in finding funding and linking kids with the larger community. Echoing the pivotal line in the baseball fantasy movie *Field of Dreams*, Klattenhoff believes that "if you build it, they will come."

LIVING LAB

The third component of the Discovery Team experience—working in the woods—links students with Forest Service workers. It's a linkage that has some baggage. A lot of White Pass kids, sons and daughters of loggers and millworkers, have grown up viewing the Forest Service as cops enforcing the rules and regs of the woodlands. In a timber-dependent place hit hard by new logging limits, an often-bitter "us and them" outlook has prevailed, says McHugh of the Forest Service.

As one of the originators of the Discovery Team, McHugh had great hopes for forging new attitudes between the Forest Service and locals. Tensions have indeed begun to dissolve in the mist of the national forest and the sweat of adolescent labor. Using such specialized tools as a grubber hoe and a "Polaski" (a small shovel used to dig fire trails), students are clearing the way for wider use of the woods. They've hacked out a "barrier-free" trail at Woods Creek, making it accessible to wheelchairs. They've built an outdoor amphitheater at Iron Creek Campground. They've made a wheelchair-friendly fishing ramp at Takahlakh Lake. They've erected a picnic shelter at Covel Creek.

While the high school Discovery Team is hacking trails through the undergrowth, middle schoolers are catching Cascade frogs and collecting samples of plankton for environmental-impact studies. These 15 to 20 kids are the Summer Scientists—young naturalists exploring their world under the tutelage of science teacher John Mullenix and an array of forestry experts.

The Summer Scientists program, paid for and administered by Centralia Community College, is free to kids. Parents provide transportation to the ponds and trailheads. At summer's end, kids present their findings at the ranger station. At first, McHugh had to twist arms to get anybody to show up. Now, the agency employees willingly give up their lunch hour, crowding into a packed room to listen.

"It's so wonderful to hear students explain concepts many of us didn't learn until college," McHugh says.

White Pass kids have a million acres in their backyard—dense timberland ribbed with creeks and canyons, brimming with lakes and ponds, alive with bugs, birds, and beasts. This vast living laboratory is unmatched by even the jazziest equipment or most dazzling software in wealthier suburban schools.

"There is a lot of fascinating science that can be learned there," says Mullenix.

Taking full advantage of this living lab, White Pass teachers are collaborating with Forest Service employees and scientists on still more lessons that take the classroom into the woods. Seventh- and eighth-graders are helping the Forest Service study cross-sections of Camp Creek, which was restored after the disastrous floods of 1996. With training from Forest Service hydrologist John Gier, students go into the woods to collect random samples of pebbles in the stream bed and calculate the depth and slope of the stream. Back in the classroom, teams of students painstakingly measure each rock with calipers, and then record the data and calculate averages. From these measurements, scientists can tell whether the stream is cutting down or filling in.

During the 20-year study, scientists and students will also examine stream-dwelling macroinvertebrates (stone flies are an example), count large woody debris, and monitor percentages of sun to shade. Only students who become certified by the Forest Service contribute to the official study. "The students have to be very accurate so that we can really use that data," explains McHugh.

There are chemistry lessons and water-quality studies, too. Students are examining, for example, the impact of acid rain and camping on local lakes. In earth sciences, a Forest Service geologist teaches kids how to take a stratographic cross-section and identify fossils.

Mullenix and his wife, Carolyn, a third-grade teacher, are working with silviculturist Ed Thompkins to create an integrated curriculum for elementary and middle-level students. The lessons—which will blend art, literature, and science into a cohesive unit—will connect field trips with classroom activities, such as reading the children's classic, *The Giving Tree*. The goal, says John Mullenix, is to reach all kinds of learners by mixing all sorts of learning strategies—cognitive, psychomotor, tactile, and affective (emotional).

The teachers and foresters are forming what Mullenix calls "a web of interactions." "These collaborations have to be long-term," he stresses. "We become friends. We're partners."

After several years of meetings and joint projects among the Forest Service, the school district, and the community, relations between the groups "have absolutely improved," Mullenix says. McHugh agrees. In the past, community meetings could be combative, with law-enforcement officers standing by. But recent meetings about such controversial issues as road closures and firewood restrictions—meetings that in the past might have been "very tense"—have been congenial, McHugh relates.

"It's just an amazing difference," she says. "Even personally, I've seen a difference in how people greet me at the grocery store.

"Perceptions have changed," McHugh explains. "People see us more as partners in the community. They have a sense that we're all working together now. That's a new role for us."

Working in the woods with their Polaskis and Abneys (hand levels used for measuring stream slope), students gain a lot more than knowledge of trail construction or science. They also gain a connection to their roots, a "sense of place" that anchors them.

"It doesn't make any difference what they choose to do with their life," says Mullins. "They have this foundation, and it's always going to be here. I want them to feel good about staying here or coming back—being here because they want to, not because they have to."

In the midst of this severe economic slump, when school levies in most surrounding communities are failing or barely squeaking by, White Pass School District has tapped into a deep well of support. Three-fourths of the residents voted "yes" on a recent levy—all the more surprising because only one in four White Pass families has children in school.

"If we only work with and show that we are interested in the 25 percent who have kids in school, I think we are missing the boat," says Superintendent Anthony. "I think we could potentially come out big losers.

"You've really got to go out on a one-on-one basis—you have to solicit people. You need to take a proactive approach." ■

THE WORLD IS COMING TO US

Story and photos by DENISE JARRETT

> WITH THE STRENGTH
> THAT COMES FROM
> EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE,
> WE LEARN TO DEAL WITH THE FUTURE;
> AT THE SAME TIME, WE
> STAND FIRMLY PLANTED
> IN OUR CULTURAL ROOTS.
>
> —Tanquik Theatre,
> Yup'ik performance group

Seen from the air, the riverine delta in Southwest Alaska displays its fall splendor with a sprawl of russet, green, and yellow tundra. Traversed by numberless tributaries and sloughs of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, with overflow collecting into darkened ponds, the delta appears as much lake as it is land.

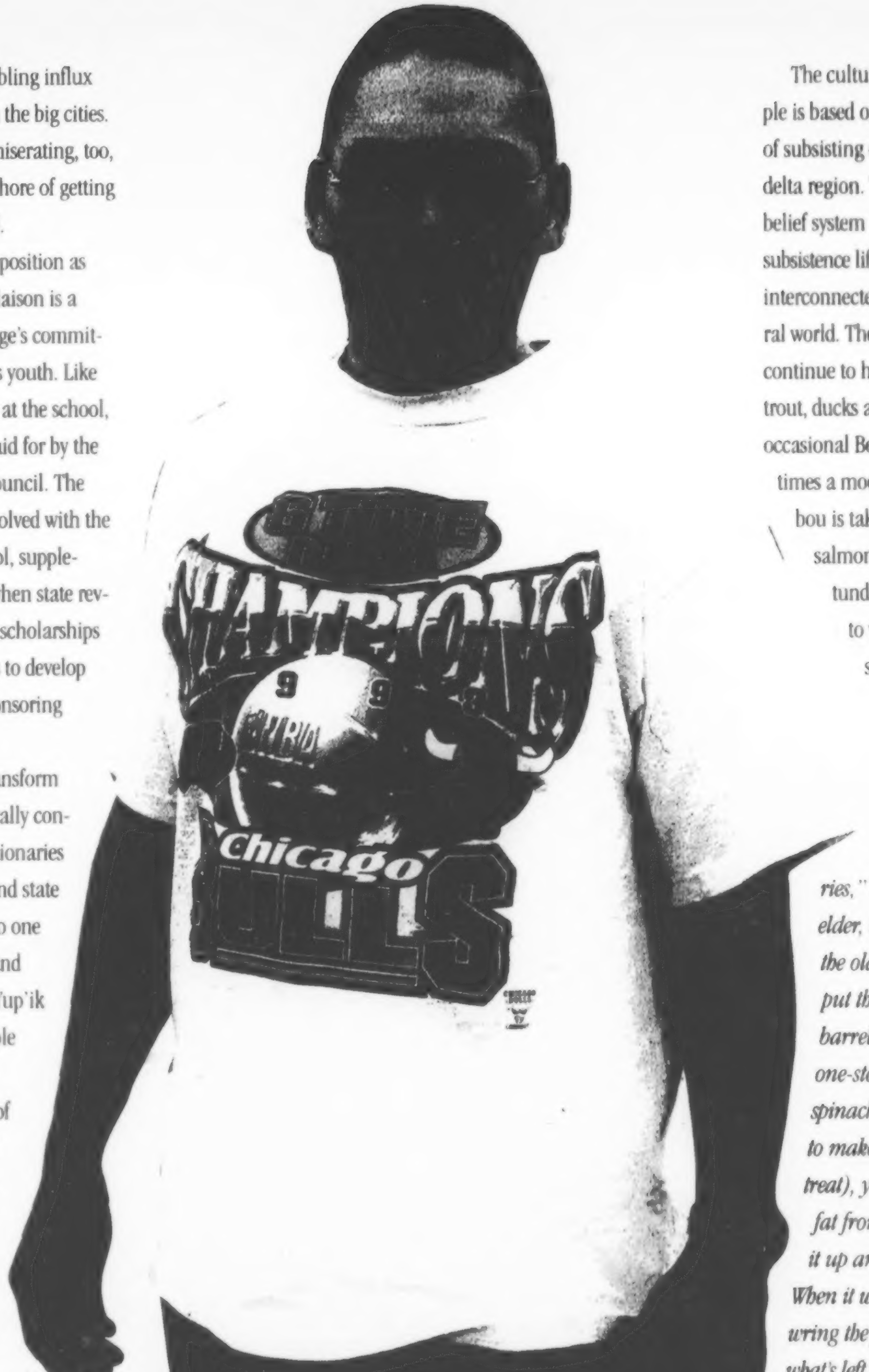
Beneath the pond surfaces can be seen brush strokes of chartreuse that turn out to be long reeds bending in the wind-rubbed current. A pair of whistling swans rests among the bog orchid and cotton grass. Above them, a squadron of geese passes over. It is the time of the great gathering. The abundance of water in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta provides critical habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds.

In the lower delta lies the Kanektok, a river dotted with sandbars and teeming with chum, king, and sockeye salmon. Where the Kanektok empties into the Bering Sea lies the village of Quinhagak (say: KWIN-a-hawk) The visitor to this Yup'ik Eskimo community of 550 is struck by a sense of exhilarating isolation. To the west across the shallow waters of the bay, the Bering Sea cuts a dark band beneath the sky; to the south, there's the faint outline of the Kilbuck mountain range. Elsewhere, the tundra rolls undisturbed.

Quinhagak is 70 miles south of Bethel, a community of 5,000 which serves as air transportation hub for the region, and 400 miles west of Anchorage. For travelers from afar, it is accessible only by small plane or boat. For local travel, residents use four-wheelers, snowmobiles, and, occasionally, dogsleds. It doesn't take long for the visitor to realize that this remote community is thriving. A couple of dump trucks roar incongruously along the village's one road, carrying gravel foundation for a new airstrip and a health clinic/washeteria. Four-wheelers crisscross the village throughout the day, carrying people to work, school, the village store, post office—typical errands in an exceptional place.

On one cold morning, Samson Mann shrugs on his jacket and leaves his office in the Quinhagak school, called by its Yup'ik name, *Kuinerrarmiut Elitnaurviat*. Outside, he climbs onto a four-wheeler and drives a short distance to a wooden house raised on stilts above the tundra. As school-community liaison, he is here to check on a student's unexcused absence.

Inside, he learns that the student has overslept and, while the rousted youth is dressing, Mann sits chatting with the parents at a kitchen table. As often happens, the talk turns to fishing: this season's



salmon run; the troubling influx of fly fishermen from the big cities. There's a bit of commiserating, too, about the universal chore of getting children off to school.

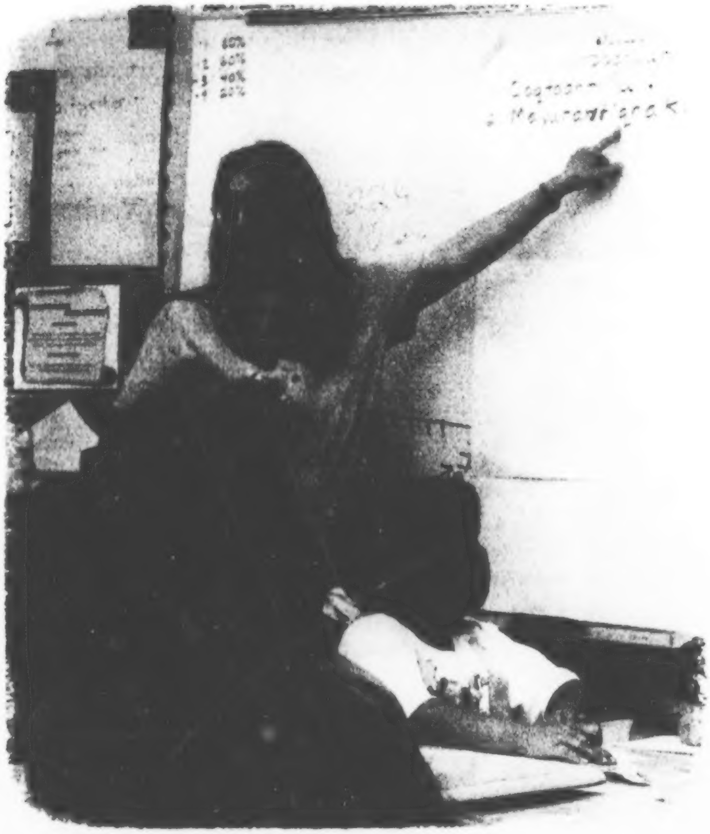
Mann's full-time position as school-community liaison is a reflection of the village's commitment to educating its youth. Like some other staff jobs at the school, Mann's position is paid for by the Kwinhagak Tribal Council. The council is closely involved with the activities of the school, supplementing its budget when state revenues fall, awarding scholarships and helping students to develop career plans, and sponsoring summer programs.

Determined to transform the school—historically controlled by White missionaries and distant federal and state bureaucracies —into one that plays a central and relevant role in this Yup'ik community, the people of Quinhagak have assumed leadership of important aspects of their children's education. They are achieving this transformation by infusing the school environment with Yup'ik language and culture.

The culture of the Yup'ik people is based on thousands of years of subsisting on the wildlife of the delta region. Their ceremonies and belief system revolve around this subsistence lifestyle, expressing their interconnectedness with the natural world. The people of Quinhagak continue to harvest salmon and trout, ducks and geese, seal and the occasional Beluga whale. Sometimes a moose or migrating caribou is taken. While picking salmonberries out on the tundra, villagers take care to watch for the occasional brown bear.

"We pick berries, some people call them cloudberries, we call them salmonberries," recalls Quinhagak elder, Carrie Pleasant. "In the old days, we would put the berries in wooden barrels and top them with one-stem grass and wild spinach. If you were going to make akutaq *(a sweet treat), you took the tallow, fat from the reindeer, cut it up and put it in a skillet. When it was cool, you would wring the fat out. You put what's left with sugar in a bowl, put in seal oil and the berries."*

Like many other Alaska Natives,



Dora Strunk, who grew up in Quinhagak, teaches Yup'ik phrases to her class of third- and fourth-graders.

the Yup'ik people have felt pressured by 100 years of Western influence to relinquish their language, beliefs, and ceremonies. In villages across the state, the all-too-common result has been to diminish the people's core identity, leaving them demoralized and prone to alcoholism, domestic abuse, and suicide. Because theirs was one of the last regions of Alaska to be occupied by Westerners, the Yup'ik people of the delta were able to sustain a stronger link to their language and some traditions well into this century. This twist of fate, as well as recent legislation supporting bilingual education and self-governance by tribal councils, empowers people in villages like Quinhagak to maintain a leadership role in the education of their children, seeing to it that their youth are educated in Yup'ik as well as Western knowledge.

Today, students at Quinhagak learn not only the core curriculum of a Western education, but the skills and values of their ancestors, as well. Paid an honorarium by the tribal council, village elders regularly deliver guest lectures at the school. They teach students carving and basket weaving, Eskimo dancing and mask ceremonies. They show how to prepare and preserve salmon, how to sew seal and mink pelts. The teachers link this traditional knowledge to core Western concepts in science, social studies, geography, health, mathematics, and language arts.

For many, the most meaningful change in the school has been the adoption of Yup'ik as the primary language of instruction from kindergarten through fourth grade. Students study English an hour each day until they reach the fifth grade when the practice is reversed: English becomes the primary language of instruction, and Yup'ik reading and writing is taught separately.

"Research in bilingual education shows that if students learn to read and understand science, math, and other subjects in their own language, they establish a firm base from which they can then transfer that knowledge into English," says Carol Barnhardt, Assistant Professor of Education at University of Alaska Fairbanks. Barnhardt has been working with Quinhagak Principal, John Mark, as part of the Alaska Onward to Excellence (AOTE) program administered by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Since 1995, Quinhagak educators, AOTE team members, and staff from the Lower Kuskokwim School District have worked together to identify learning goals and to develop a school reform implementation plan for the Quinhagak school. The school has chosen as its primary student learning goal, "to communicate more effectively in Yup'ik."

In Dora Strunk's third- and fourth-grade classroom, there is an alphabet key on the wall. To a non-Native, it looks familiar until one notices that eight letters are "missing." This is the Yup'ik alphabet, originally devised by the Moravian missionaries in the early part of the century and later developed further by orthographers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The children are doing a writing exercise, and Strunk calls on them one by one to read from their work.

Chantal reads, "*Caqtaanrilu!*" (Don't mess around with that!)

Next, Walter reads, "*Mayuraviiqnak!*" (Quit climbing!)

Strunk, 37, grew up in Quinhagak. Like most people her generation and older, she had to leave Quinhagak to attend high school. (Not until a 1976 Alaska Supreme Court ruling was it mandated that every village be provided with a public high school.) By example, her parents taught her to value learning and literacy.

"They both stressed the importance of going to school," Strunk says. "My dad quit when he was in ninth grade, but I always saw him reading. We always had magazines like *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Life*. From looking at my dad reading, it got me curious —why is he always reading? I started reading those magazines in grade school, because we didn't have TV back then!" she laughs. "My mom only got up to the sixth grade, but she was always teaching Native crafts and how to cook and how to sew. My dad fished and we'd go egg hunting. Before there were any four-wheelers, we walked to pick salmonberries, blackberries, and cranberries. Now that I have my own children, I find that I'm passing that—the way I was brought up—on to them, too."

The Lower Kuskokwim School District is a driving force behind efforts to preserve and cultivate the Yup'ik culture and language in Southwest Alaska. Quinhagak is one of 21 villages served by the district, which encompasses 44,000 square miles (an area about the size of Pennsylvania). The district's curriculum department creates bilingual programs that reflect a Yup'ik emphasis and trains school staff in effective bilingual methodologies and practices. The district has been prolific in its development of Yup'ik language materials to support the curriculum. One such development is a yearlong thematic unit that integrates Yup'ik activities, beliefs, and experience with

Retired from teaching, Carrie Pleasant often returns to the classroom as a guest speaker.

academic content areas in mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. Quinhagak has incorporated this program into its curriculum.

Upingaurluta, "getting ready for life," is a series of standards-based thematic units founded on aspects of the Yup'ik cycle of life: the self and one's role in the community; gathering food and preparing for hunts; clothing and celebrating with masks; survival skills and fish camp; and recreation and storytelling.

It would be nearly impossible to accomplish this kind of culture-focused curriculum and instruction without the participation of people from the community. In addition to inviting elders to speak to the students, the school employs among the highest numbers of Yup'ik certified teachers in the district. Last year, students in first through sixth grades were taught by Yup'ik-speaking certified teachers, and every class through 12th grade had a Yup'ik-speaking teacher's aide.

The elders help to strengthen the link between the present and the past—an essential combination, many believe, for the well-being and future success of their young people.

"You get a feeling of togetherness and support from people like

Carrie Pleasant," says Emma Petluska, a lifelong resident of Quinhagak and the school's detention supervisor. "If everyone in the community encourages children, it would just grow from that. The school is not the only place for education, it's all day long. It involves everybody that the kids know. It has to be that way for children to learn."

"I talk to the students about how we used to use and store fish without electricity," says Pleasant, who taught first grade at the Quinhagak school for 22 years. Now retired, she is a frequent guest speaker, instructing students in some of the old ways. "I show them how to cut the skin of the salmon and hang them to dry, then smoke them. You can put the fish heads with the liver and gills to make stinkheads. You top the fish heads and things with grass and wet moss, let it ferment for two weeks, then wash and eat them. In the winter, we would catch blackfish by cutting a square hole in the ice, then putting a net down into the water. If you use your hand, the fish will swim away."

The school's principal, John Mark, also grew up in Quinhagak. He was among the first in the village to earn a college degree. After obtaining an associate of arts degree in bilingual education through the Bethel campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Mark earned a bachelor's degree in education from the Oregon College of Education. After teaching for a few years, he returned to college at University of Alaska Anchorage and earned a master's degree in public school administration. He's been principal at the Quinhagak school for four years.

"When I was growing up," recalls Mark, 44, "the village depended heavily on subsistence. Now, with technology, refrigeration, more flights in and out of the villages, hunting equipment —these all play a big part in making hunting and subsistence gathering much easier and keeping food much longer. People don't have to spend as much time on subsistence. With these improvements, people have more time on their hands. What are they going to do with it? Now they must be educated and find something for themselves to do."

For the younger generation, new tasks are replacing subsistence work. "The more mature this generation gets," Marks says, "the more they understand the importance of education to their livelihoods and survival. There is now record keeping, IRS, employment records.

See THE WORLD, Page 52

Hands-on lessons in Native crafts teach students the skills of their ancestors.

OPENING DOORS

Carmen Tsuboi Chan, Principal of John Muir Elementary, converses with Greg Tuke of Powerful Schools

SEATTLE'S INNER CITY DRUMS UP POWERFUL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

Story and photos by SUZIE BOSS

On the south side of Seattle [illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The story begins back in 1990 when a handful of folks got together to talk about their neighborhood. Greg Tuke remembers those initial conversations. "We were people who knew each other informally, from potluck suppers and kids' soccer games," he says. "Because our children attended different schools, we knew that each school had different strengths. One was great at teaching environmental science, but had no computers. Another had computers, but no environmental science program. How could we use those individual strengths, and draw on the diversity of this neighborhood, to make all the local schools great?" From the beginning, Tuke says, the idea was to use the community's own resources to create "world-class schools."

Coincidentally, a few elementary school principals had been having a similar conversation. Physically, their schools were in good repair. Three of the four neighborhood schools had been newly renovated or rebuilt. But because of poverty and family pressures, many students were not thriving. Nearly two-thirds of the children in this neighborhood qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. About a quarter are the first in their families to attend school in this country. How could the principals work together to help these children and their families break out of a cycle of poverty and underachievement?

Those early, isolated conversations led to a meeting that drew about a dozen parents, educators, and other community members who weren't connected to the schools. The group clicked. They developed a vision with three ambitious goals:

- Improve student performance for all children
- Strengthen the community
- Create a successful and cost-effective model for school reform

Before long, the group had a name, a plan of action, and some seed money from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. In 1991, Powerful Schools was launched as a coalition of four elementary schools and two community organizations. Tuke soon left his job in the private sector, where he worked in community relations and grant management for a savings and loan, to direct the new nonprofit organization.

Today, Powerful Schools is praised as a model of school-community collaboration. Hundreds of local residents of all ages take advantage of community education classes offered at four elementary schools. A reading enrichment program is so successful at raising students' test scores that it has been adopted as a "best practices" model by the state superintendent's office. Hundreds of families attend "Family Fun Nights," where they share a meal, participate in educational programs, and strengthen the bond between home and school. "A Night at the Rap," an annual event that showcases the neighborhood's artists and performers, draws an enthusiastic audience of about 800. A handbook describing the Powerful Schools approach has been distributed to more than 200 other communities.

From the perspective of the school district, Powerful Schools looks like "a very useful model," says Sharon Green, Chief Academic Officer of Seattle Public Schools. "It envelops the student and staff in a support web. This cannot help but affect academic achievement and enhance self-esteem." Powerful Schools, Green believes, "changes how students feel about themselves and how the community feels about schools."

Yet even as the program has grown and evolved, Powerful Schools hasn't lost sight of its three initial goals. Helping kids, helping the community, and sharing with others—those continue to be the stars by which this program navigates.

Young dramatists enact an impromptu scene during an after-school theater workshop

What helps children succeed in school? "We all know that parent involvement is critical," says Tuke. At 46, he has been both observer and participant as his own two children have moved through adolescence and the teen years. "But how do we get all parents more involved? How do we reach out to them, if they aren't making a connection with school when their children are young?"

Serving a mixed community, including many low-income and single-parent families as well as middle-class and even a few wealthy families, Powerful Schools provides the support that makes it easier for all parents to walk into the classroom. Day care is provided so that parents with young children can volunteer their time. Training is provided so that parents who are unsure of their own skills can develop self-confidence. If money is an obstacle to participation, Powerful Schools will even hire parents as tutors. And for parents who may have unpleasant memories of their own school days, Powerful Schools makes sure these interactions are positive.

One morning in October, for instance, about 30 parents, grandparents, and even one great-grand-

mother attended a training session on the fundamentals of reading. For the rest of the school year, they will use these skills while tutoring first-graders in a program Powerful Schools calls its Reading Club. The one-to-one approach is time intensive. Participating first-graders receive daily individual attention, 30 minutes per session. But the rewards have been significant. Achievement levels have increased among youngsters identified as being the most at risk of academic failure. According to their parents, the children's attitudes about learning have soared along with their test scores.

Val Wells, a veteran tutor and neighborhood parent, says she has seen "remarkable results" from the Reading Club program. Many children need emotional support as much as academic help. "Sometimes they just need extra mother love," Wells says. "They have a lot of stuff going on in their lives. So we give them a hug, but we also give them firm and consistent rules."

The one-to-one approach creates a bond between tutor and child, and also a chance to catch problems that might be missed in a group setting. Tutors might notice which students need eye exams, hearing tests, or speech therapy, for instance. They talk regularly with classroom teachers. "We work as a whole team to help each child succeed," Wells explains.

Last year, she watched one little boy become the first in his family to master the fundamentals of reading. His older siblings had failed in school, "but he made it. By the end of the year, he could *read*." Another tutor said she watched one student evolve from "a chronic behavior problem into a budding rocket scientist. He just took off," she said, over the course of the school year.

A number of other Powerful Schools programs support students' academic success in different ways. Powerful Writers, for instance, brings published authors into the classroom to teach writing skills and give classroom teachers fresh ideas about how to enhance literacy. Powerful Buddies matches volunteer mentors with students who need another caring, consistent adult in their lives. Powerful Arts brings professional artists into the schools for residencies and performances. Rather than being add-ons, however, each new program is introduced with care so that it connects school and community in a deliberate way. Every year, Tuke believes, the program gets "more focused, more specific" in its approach to helping students succeed.

HELPING THE COMMUNITY

During the 1997-98 school year, 650 children and adults participated in more than 75 community education classes offered by Powerful Schools at its four elementary school sites. Where did they find instructors for everything from Web-page design to bicycle repair to hip hop?

"All the resources are right here in this community," says Tuke. After seven years of running the program, he stresses, "That's the biggest lesson I've learned. What's often perceived as a poor community is actually very rich with talents and skills."

When Powerful Schools was just getting off the ground, the program founders walked the neighborhood to conduct a door-to-door survey. They asked, "What would you like the schools to offer you? And what could you offer the schools?"

Some people just wanted to be able to use the gym at night. Others had more specific requests, such as access to computers or after-school programs for their kids that would be more enriching than day care. And many seemed downright flattered when asked what skills and talents they had to share with their neighbors.

Rather than housing all the community education classes in

GETTING TECHNOLOGY TO THE GRASSROOTS

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one location, Powerful Schools moves the site each day. That way, people get past local school boundaries and mix with neighbors from throughout the community.

By providing training to volunteers, Powerful Schools also uplifts the confidence and self-esteem of the whole community. A mom named Yuriko Ueda, who moved to Seattle from her native Japan, said volunteering her time "taught me how things work" within the culture of American schools. She no longer feels like an outsider in her new community. Many parents who begin as volunteers develop skills that lead to new jobs and brighter futures. Adds Ueda, who was recently hired as an office aide: "I've learned alongside my children. We've all been in school together."

SHARING WITH OTHERS

From its inception, Powerful Schools has attempted to create a model that other communities could borrow. "Our ideas weren't brand new," Tuke says. "We all know that parent involvement makes sense. We know that community schools are a good idea. But we've tried to refine that and bring a focus to what we do."

When asked by other communities about the lessons that have been learned in Seattle, Tuke offers these highlights:

- **Involve the principals.** Community-led reform efforts that don't engage the local school leader won't get off the ground. All four principals at Powerful Schools' partner schools serve on the program's board of directors.
- **Think collaboratively.** Powerful Schools brings together four Seattle Public Schools (John Muir, Hawthorne, Whitworth, and Orca) and two local organizations (Mt. Baker Community Club and Columbia City Neighborhood Association), creating a broader base of support and stronger ties across the community.
- **Attract a critical mass.** Getting a program started means enlisting support from a core of community members, including some with no attachments to the schools. Says Tuke: "There are plenty of people out there who want to help the schools and give back to the community, but they may not know how to become involved. Provide them with a way to get organized."
- **Support teachers.** Powerful Schools tries to loop everything it does back to the classroom. The after-school classes, for instance, are designed to be entertaining, but also build on concepts introduced during the regular school day. "You can't do that if you're divorced from the school," Tuke explains. Powerful Schools coordinates its offerings with what teachers need "to create great schools. We know that teachers can't do it all on their own. It takes all of us, working together."

Why should these lessons matter to community members who don't happen to have children attending school? Nancy Rawles is a playwright and novelist. Her first novel, *Love Like Gumbo* (Fjord Press) won the 1998 American Book Award and a 1998 Governor's Writers Award for Washington State. She happens to live in the Rainier Valley. She has a two-year-old daughter, too young to be enrolled in school just yet. Rawles has participated in many writer-in-residence programs, but usually with older students. She decided to become involved with Powerful Schools, she says, "because these are my neighborhood kids."

So on a recent autumn afternoon, she was walking around the desks in a fourth-grade classroom, coaxing 10-year-old writers to bring all their senses into their stories. She pulled out images they didn't know they owned: the crunch of popcorn underfoot in a movie house, or the way freshly cut grass smells to a football player who's just been tackled. She showed them how to use these images to make their writing come alive. Through one of her own characters in a play called *The Assassination of Edwin T. Pratt*, Rawles speaks about the importance of collaboration. Pratt, a leader in the fight for equal opportunity, was executive director of Seattle's Urban League during the 1960s. He was gunned down in the doorway of his Seattle home in 1969. In the play, a character speaks these lines:

> *Doors are opening. Doors are opening but they won't stay open long. All you need to do is get your foot in. All you need to do is get your foot in the door. You get in and then you can open the door for somebody else. Eventually. Eventually, we'll be able to keep the doors open. Eventually, if enough people get in, we'll be able to keep all the doors open all the time.*

On the south side of Seattle, doors are opening wide in a most powerful way. ■

Climbing in the Siskiyous

STEP BY STEP, RURAL RESIDENTS MAKE THEIR WAY TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Story and photos by JOYCE RIHA LINIK

WOLF CREEK & SUNNY VALLEY, Oregon—In the Siskiyou Mountains of Southern Oregon where the forested earth folds and crinkles like mounds of green velvet, two small towns are tucked into the creases of neighboring valleys and tied with watery ribbons of cerulean blue. It is easy to see why Wolf Creek and Sunny Valley have appealed to generations of settlers.

Pioneers found that these valleys offered protection from the elements, as well as a plentiful water supply from the nearby Rogue River and its network of feeder creeks. Industrialists were attracted to bountiful woodlands and the promise of gold in surrounding hills. Early entrepreneurs set up service industries along stagecoach routes—an inn or a tavern, a café or a mercantile store.

With the demise of the mining and timber industries, more recent immigrants have been lured by the simple, rustic beauty of the place. A 1969 cover feature in *Life* magazine portrayed the area as a refuge for those in search of peace, love, and living off the land. As a result, an influx of tie-dyed renegades loaded up their VW vans and headed for the hills.

While he missed this flower-child pilgrimage, moving to Wolf Creek some 11 years later, Michael McManus fit right in. At 61, with his graying beard and long, tied-back locks, he looks like a man who embraced the ideals of the '60s. Yet his resume demonstrates that he didn't get waylaid as any campus philosopher. After obtaining a master's degree in psychology from Humboldt State University, McManus worked his way up the ladder of the Eureka, California, school system, first as an English teacher and coach, then as a school counselor, and ultimately as Superintendent. Unfortunately, this climb took McManus further and further away from the job he loved most: working with children.

A decision to get away from it all took him to the Siskiyous, where McManus found both home and heart. He discovered a bucolic landscape in which he and his wife, Camille, could put down roots—literally, through an extensive herb garden—and a *raison d'etre* where his life's work was concerned, for there may have been no place that needed him more.

Josephine County, home to Wolf Creek and Sunny Valley, is Oregon's only federally designated rural Enterprise Community, identified as such because of the severe economic distress of the area. With the Siskiyou National Forest no longer providing a forest-products economy, unemployment is more than double the state average, while per capita income is three-fifths of the average Oregonian's. More than one in two of the county's rural children live in poverty, many in homes without indoor plumbing or electricity. Nine percent of schoolchildren are minorities, primarily Native American and Hispanic. Eighty-six to 98 percent of the community's children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch at school. The statistics go on and on, but suffice to say, Josephine County is in need of many things. Michael McManus, for one.

According to Dr. Steve Nelson, Director of Program and Planning Development at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, McManus understands that rural voices need to be heard and that, often, this involves creating opportunities to get heard. Though he sometimes is described as "quiet," McManus is never shy about picking up a phone to track down a resource or to connect with someone with the power to make things happen. When children are in need, he'll call Head Start's Ron Herndon or Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber or the President of the United States, if that's what it takes.

"If I had to describe Mike's role," Nelson says, "it's all about kids and all about connections. He sees how all the pieces fit together to benefit children."

KNOWING WHAT CHILDREN NEED

Where children are concerned, McManus has first-hand experience. He and his wife have raised three of their own and are in the process of raising two more, adopted through a foster-parenting program. Some might say that McManus has actually adopted many more since his arrival in Wolf Creek. He has touched the life of nearly every child in the region through his work, first as a child-and-family therapist for Family Friends, a nonprofit organization that treats survivors of child abuse and their families, and more recently as principal of Wolf Creek Elementary School.

"The school is the hub of the community," McManus says, and his statement resonates on a number of levels. Officially, the school serves some 140 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, but

actual students include far greater numbers, ranging in age from birth to senior citizens. That's because the school shares its playground with its next-door neighbor to the west, the Oregon Parent Information and Resource Center, recently opened to provide the community with parenting resources and preschool developmental activities (see sidebar, Page 38). Wolf Creek Elementary also shares some of its facilities with its two neighbors to the east: the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition, a social-service collaborative that includes 26 separate service providers, and the Sunny Wolf Community Response Team (CRT), the organization that controls Enterprise Community funds for community development.

Wolf Creek Elementary is the site for adult evening classes in such subjects as computer software, writing, mushroom tracking, and even belly dancing. And why not? "It is the community's school," McManus asserts.

That's not to say that the focus on grade-school students has gotten fuzzy. McManus is committed, as are staff members at the school, to giving Wolf Creek Elementary students the best possible education. Of course, that involves a strong focus on the basics. To strengthen students' reading skills, for example, McManus notes that every stu-

Reading is a priority for Wolf Creek students.

dent is provided with four separate opportunities to read and improve each day. And the school recently acquired a computer center, equipped with enough terminals to handle a full class at a time, to ensure that Wolf Creek students learn the technological skills they will need when they advance to other schools and eventually enter the workplace.

Before teaching strategies and practices can have an effect, however, children need the kind of support that enables them to absorb the information offered. In impoverished communities like Wolf Creek and Sunny Valley, that means making sure their basic needs are taken care of—things as rudimentary as food and shelter.

"A hungry child is going to have difficulty focusing," McManus notes. Breakfast and lunch are therefore provided.

Some necessities, less tangible, are equally important. "Children need consistency and love," he explains. "They need to know someone cares."

McManus certainly does. He's outside the school each morning to greet children as they arrive; he chats with them at lunchtime in his role as cafeteria facilitator; he's there to see them off on their school buses every afternoon. He bends to their level to talk to them and calls each by name. He makes a point to praise children for their accomplishments and provide encouragement when they need it. Outside of school, he supports them as well, attending after-school events and offering assistance wherever he can. But much of the support these children need comes through community activities—like the parenting center and adult education—that are part of a larger effort to improve results for all.

Children do not live in isolation. They are affected—physically, intellectually, and emotionally—by all those around them. Parents who learn marketable skills have a better chance of finding employment and furthering their ability to provide for their children. Business owners who learn to grow their businesses not only stimulate the community's economy, but also have the potential to provide jobs. Adults who value learning and apply it to better their lives teach children to do the same.

To support each other in this endeavor, the school shares its learning resources with the community while, at the same time, the community shares its learning resources with the school. For instance, the technology center that Wolf Creek Elementary shares with its neighbors wouldn't exist if the neighbors hadn't first donated the building and hardware. If boundaries seem a bit blurred here, it's because they are.

It turns out that McManus is not only the principal of the school; he is also coordinator of the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition and closely linked with the group that shares its house-converted-to-office space, the Sunny Wolf CRT (which, incidentally, is the organization responsible for the donation of the computer center and equipment at the school). Fortunately, Gary O'Neal came on board to head the CRT. Managing all of the Enterprise Community projects is a time-consuming job, and McManus already has two of those.

BEFORE TEACHING STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES CAN HAVE AN EFFECT, CHILDREN NEED THE KIND OF SUPPORT THAT ENABLES THEM TO ABSORB THE INFORMATION OFFERED.

Make that three. In his spare time, McManus is Director of the Oregon Parent Information and Resource Center, the little house on the other side of the school.

"He has a tremendous amount of energy," says Janet Bell, who holds two jobs herself as Office Manager of both the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition and the CRT. "And when

Parents and preschoolers alike enjoy "hanging out" at the Oregon Parent Information and Resource Center. Although the goals of this program are quite serious—providing resources for parents and developing school readiness in preschool youngsters—the methods emphasize fun and informality.

The center, a joint effort of the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition, Portland's Albina Head Start, and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, is designed to support the community's disproportionately high number of children being raised by single mothers and living below the poverty level.

In many cases, residents live miles from their nearest neighbor. As a result, children may have no opportunity to socialize with others their age. Preschoolers may never have been left in the care of another adult. This isolation can be a hindrance to development and a setback once they begin school.

Marion Schneider, the child-development specialist at the parent center, plans activities to help ready young children for the school experience. Some activities involve the parents with their children; others are for children only. Sometimes, the kids just play with toys and with each other, while the parents gather in another room.

"Everything is a learning experience at this age," Schneider says. Putting a toy in the hand of a child, she explains, creates an opportunity for discovery. Through such moments, children learn growth and dexterity, cause and effect. They become familiar with their world. When they play with the other children, they learn to socialize. When they listen to Schneider guide them through a crayon exercise, they prepare to take direction from a teacher.

Wolf Creek Elementary staff have noticed the difference already. Last year, McManus notes, there were a number of new students who arrived at the start of school and really weren't prepared for the experience. This year, kindergarten teacher Linda Blackburn had her first arrivals from Schneider's class. Those who have attended classes at the center, she says, are much more advanced than those who haven't.

Parents advance along with their children. In fact, they may even have more fun. Where it may be a bit traumatic for a child who has been isolated in the country to adjust to a roomful of other children, the parents couldn't be more thrilled to connect with other adults. There's a great deal of talking and laughing whenever they meet. And there's learning, too.

While Schneider is working with the children, McManus meets with the adults for parenting class, although that's a bit of a misnomer. The experience is more of a blend of group therapy and gab session, interspersed with pearls of wisdom from McManus, delivered so skillfully that revelations seem to spring from thin air instead of from any lesson plan.

In one such "class," the conversation is already flowing when McManus mentions a notice he's seen about a group that's seeking out potential foster parents. This turns the conversation to issues that children may have from early childhood experiences and what kinds of parenting are good or bad. What the participants don't seem to realize is that McManus has steered them here to discuss parenting issues in a "safe" forum. While talking about foster children and other people's parenting skills, the participants begin to share their own views and frustrations. They compare experiences. Together, they learn to solve problems.

One recent discussion, for instance, surrounds discipline. Inevitably, the issue of spanking comes up and a debate ensues about whether it's better to spank with a bare hand or with an inanimate object such as a kitchen spoon.

Cindy Henry, a mother in the group, says that instead of spanking, she asks her son if she should tell Mr. McManus about his bad behavior. The group laughs.

Henry explains. It's not that the child is afraid of McManus, a self-described "marshmallow," but that he respects his principal and knows that his principal respects him. He doesn't want his image tarnished in McManus' eyes.

This gives McManus the perfect opportunity to talk about alternatives to spanking, specifically the "assertive discipline" he and his staff use at the school. He doesn't get preachy on them. After all, he says, there's no parent—including himself—who doesn't have room to grow. He doesn't get technical on them. But he does give the parents an idea of how assertive discipline works, noting that it involves building mutual trust and respect with a child, and it rewards positive behavior.

If, however, children behave badly, McManus suggests that parents identify the action, inform them of the result that will occur if they continue to engage in the behavior, and give them a choice. He also plants the suggestion that they go sit in on Maureen Hutcheson's first-grade class to get an idea of how assertive discipline works.

The conversation segues into another discussion and eventually ends when some of the preschoolers come looking for their mommies. Later, when one of those mommies is asked about parenting classes, she says there aren't any. "Oh, sometimes we get together and talk," she concedes, "but there aren't any classes." ■

something needs to be done, he never shrinks from taking the hardest part of the project."

It's convenient, then, that these organizations are linked geographically, though McManus is personally wearing a path between the buildings. Their location also reinforces the strong ideological link between school and community development.

They're all working toward improving life for the community as a whole—children and adults. Working with the child involves working with the parent. Working with the parent affects the child. And education—or learning, a less daunting term for some—is a key ingredient in these seamless efforts.

ONE BIG CLASSROOM

In many ways, the Wolf Creek/Sunny Valley region itself is one big classroom.

Community members like Tom Greene and David Storey look forward to their day as schoolteachers every year. Volunteer firefighters from the town, these men visit during Fire Prevention Week. Throughout the day, groups of students gather in the cafeteria to learn about "the great escape," mapping a route out of a burning building in advance in case the need ever arises.

The students are rapt. For children anywhere, firefighters and fire trucks are exciting stuff.

Greene draws pictures of a burning house on the chalkboard. "You'll want to look for the nearest window," he instructs.

"But what if you don't have a window?" asks a child. The question is a reminder that many of the community's children live in makeshift dwellings that may not have windows or even doors. Some families resort to tents and cars when times are rough.

Without missing a beat, Greene broadens his response to exits of any kind.

When the lesson has ended, the children can barely contain themselves as they are guided outside to get a closer look at the gleaming white fire and rescue trucks. The firefighters even manage to work a bit of math into their presentation while showing the children the truck's water gauge. Storey says they tailor the lesson for different grade levels.

When Maureen Hutcheson's first-grade students are back in their classroom, she gathers the children in a semicircle around her and asks them to summarize lessons learned. Hands shoot up so quickly, small bodies are almost propelled into the air. It appears the firefighters have met with teaching success. At the least, "Stop, drop, and roll," is firmly engrained in students' minds.

The community also serves as classroom when the students venture out. A lesson for area students has to do with the nature of wetlands and how to restore them in an area decimated by mining over the last century-and-a-half. The Golden Coyote Wetlands reclamation effort has received the financial backing of the Southwest Oregon Resource Conservation and Development Council, among others. The project was the dream-child of local resident Jack Smith who, remembering waterways once thick with steelhead and salmon, was inspired to restore the area to its former bounty. Students have been involved in helping to survey and inventory the land, and to clear intrusive, nonnative plants.

WORKING WITH THE CHILD INVOLVES WORKING WITH THE PARENT. WORKING WITH THE PARENT AFFECTS THE CHILD. AND EDUCATION (OR "LEARNING," A LESS DAUNTING TERM FOR SOME) IS A KEY INGREDIENT IN THESE SEAMLESS EFFORTS.

As the project progresses, students will use the site to study both wildlife and history. Eleanor Pugh, an avid ornithologist who has catalogued local bird populations, has already begun to educate the area's children and adults on the complex world of wetlands species. Increased numbers of deer, beaver, and turtles are also anticipated. And history buffs need only cross the creek to find Golden, an abandoned gold-rush era mining town that is remarkably well preserved.

ONE-STOP SHOPPING

Wolf Creek is located 20 miles and two mountain passes away from Grants Pass, the nearest city. Lack of transportation makes it hard for many residents to access state or county service providers. "So," McManus explains, "we said, 'Come to us. We'll give you the space to provide your services.'"

The truth is, they didn't have a space waiting. But McManus and others were adamant about getting the services out to the people. If service providers would come, they would find a space.

Service providers came: representatives from federal, state, and local organizations; designees from public and private foundations. They came to provide welfare and employment resources, health services and counseling, firewood permits and driver licenses. They met in a back room loaned by the local church and set up shop. Because there was no heat in the church's annex and winter in the Siskiyous can get really cold, McManus would come early to start a fire in the wood-burning stove. This image of McManus lighting fires has stuck. Now, the community says he lights fires wherever he goes.

Sid Jack, from the Oregon Employment Department office in Grants Pass, was one of the early members of the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition. He remembers the first community meeting he attended in 1995 when he looked around the group assembled in the church annex and saw more service providers in attendance than local residents. Having worked with many communities over the years, he thought, "Here goes another round of we-know-what's-good-for-you." But the Sunny/Wolf community surprised him. The word may have been slow to spread in the beginning, but now, Jack says, "there are more locals than providers at the meetings," even though the list of providers has grown. What's more, turf battles are nonexistent, he says. "There's a real spirit of we-can-do-it."

Further, Jack says he finds the coalition to be "the most cooperative group [he's] ever worked with."

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The folks in Wolf Creek are much more concerned about getting the work done than worrying about who gets credit. "There is less turf battle," he says, than he's seen in other places. "In fact, it's non-existent."

With the approval of clients, service providers collaborate to find the best ways to help people in need. These sessions are called "staffings" and they are highly confidential to respect the privacy of those involved. One case involved a couple with four children, living in two cars and a tent. Representatives from several service providers—including Adult and Family Services, the Josephine County Housing and Community Development Council, Services to Children and Families, and the Oregon Employment Department —got together to find fast solutions. They met with the couple on a Wednesday. By the following Monday, service providers had come up with available housing as well as job referrals. Had these services not been available in one location, the family might still be driving back and forth between agencies located in different parts of the state and waiting in lines to see caseworkers who would only be able to help with one piece of the puzzle. And that's assuming one of their cars was functional.

This collaborative approach is rewarding to the service providers, as well as the clients. Instead of sitting in an office seeing an endless stream of cases, they get to know their clients personally in their own environment, which helps them to better understand clients' needs. And they get to see when they've made a difference. "It's extremely refreshing," says Jack.

SETTING A POWERFUL EXAMPLE

When community efforts help adults, they also help children —not just by providing life's necessities, but also by providing opportunities that can make the difference between a child merely surviving or learning to lead a productive, rewarding life. "It's not just the physical support that's important," says resident Ron Murray. He'd be the first to tell others not to underestimate the power of a good example.

Ten years ago, after his stint with the U.S. Army ended, Murray and his daughter, Hannah, moved to Wolf Creek. When he found no employment in the area, he got resourceful. A good mechanic, Murray thought he could make a go at a business of his own. Unfortunately, his repair shop met with a catch-22: Many residents in this poor community can't afford cars. Murray's attempt at a landscaping business also failed. With a child to support and nowhere else to turn, he found himself on welfare and fighting serious depression.

Murray's involvement with the folks at the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition and the CRT helped him regain his footing, slowly but surely. First, Murray took advantage of service providers' offers to help him with his depression and a worsening alcohol problem. Then, Murray says, "I finally decided it was time to do something for myself." He took hold of his bootstraps and gave a good tug.

One of the vision statements adopted by the residents of Sunny Valley and Wolf Creek was a commitment to taking part in the development of the community, even—and, in fact, especially —on a volunteer basis. Murray took this tenet to heart. He began volunteering at the Sunny Wolf program office and, in the process, learned about a temporary employment program offered by the Job Council. He approached CRT head O'Neal with a proposal, and the CRT agreed. Through the program, Murray would spend six months working for the CRT; the state would pay most of Murray's salary; and the CRT would provide job training. Because Murray demonstrated some skill and interest in writing, folks at the CRT

A second-grade boy tackles a math project helped enroll him in a business-English program offered by Rogue River Community College. At the end of the six-month period, the Sunny Wolf staff was impressed. So was the community, which votes on the allocation of all CRT development funds. In this case, they voted to hire Murray full time to work in the CRT office.

Of this experience, Murray says, "It feels good to be productive, to be a plus to the community, to earn respect." He loves his job and the people he works with, both the staffers and the clients for whom he has special empathy. "Now, I rush to get out the door in the morning instead of trying to hide behind it."

The effect on Murray's daughter is also evident. While she had always been a good student, her grades clouded during the worst of the storm. Now, besides providing his daughter with the basics, Murray can provide a positive role model. "It's really brought up her self-esteem," he says. "Seeing her father working and getting paid on a regular basis, that's been really good for her." Hannah's grades have risen to straight As, and she's taken more interest in extracurricular activities. At after-school events, Murray has noticed that she holds her head a little higher. It's clear that she is proud of her father.

Likewise, her father is proud of her. This summer, Hannah participated in another community development program organized through the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition. Through a youth employment program from The Job Council, the teen had the opportunity to work as a teacher's aide at the Oregon Parent Information and Resource Center, learn a bit about early-childhood development, and earn some pocket money of her own. This community-as-classroom experience, her father says, has opened new options for her future. Hannah is currently investigating child care and teaching as possible career goals.

Other teens took advantage of similar learning opportunities in the community.

Several found summer jobs on the Golden Coyote Wetlands project, reclaiming local waterways.

Another group found summer work on a project organized by the CRT, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and local community member Boyd Peters. In an effort to improve tourism in the area, this group cleared a hiking trail to the top of London Peak (named after Jack London who did some writing here around the turn of the century). The London Peak Trail is particularly significant because it is a wheelchair-access trail, which enables the disabled to enjoy the views usually seen only by the able-bodied.

Opportunities like these provide much-needed income for families. At the same time, they offer job training and teach valuable life skills. Further, they keep teens and young adults engaged in productive activities instead of partaking in a favorite pastime for some Wolf Creek residents: hanging out and drinking in front of a boarded-up store.

REDUCING THE RISKS

In Wolf Creek, teenagers are at particular risk of falling out of the education system and mainstream society. Because there is no middle school or high school in the valley, Sunny Wolf teens are bused to Merlin, a town on the outskirts of Grants Pass. Getting there means catching the bus at 6:20 a.m. This can take a physical toll on adolescents, whose developing bodies often need extra sleep.

Adolescence is also the first time that many of the "have nots" meet the "haves" from wealthier communities. The emotional toll can be significant. The Boys and Girls Club, a member of the Sunny Wolf Family Coalition, tries to catch kids before they fall.

National statistics show that most juvenile delinquency happens in the first hour after school. Bored kids, released from school while many adults are still working, will find something to do. In an effort to make that "something" constructive instead of destructive, the Boys and Girls Club offers Power Hour, a one-hour after-school program that provides homework help and promotes basic-skills development, including computer practice. Children of all ages are welcome, and older students often help tutor the younger ones.

Additionally, the club offers evening and weekend activities, including field trips filled with experiences many of these children might not otherwise enjoy: bowling in Grants Pass, eating pizza, seeing a movie, going ice skating, or taking a climbing class. Though the lack-of-transportation issue made these trips rare at the start, that's no longer the case.

The Fraternal Order of the Eagles lodge in Grants Pass raised the money to buy the club a van and also organized a used bicycle drive. Repairing the bikes is a new club project, and another way to teach the children about responsibility and ownership, explains Dave Plautz, coordinator of Boys and Girls Club activities in Wolf Creek. With more of the world within reach, there's no doubt that these children will travel farther in life.

Wolf Creek residents Eileen Zink and Bev Strauser saw further options for teens in a junk-filled garage behind the house that's headquarters for Sunny Wolf programs. Zink's grandmother, it seems, was fond of the adage "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." Zink was reminded of this as she heard tale after tale of bored children getting into mischief. She and Strauser decided that the Sunny Wolf garage was just what teens needed. The two women offered to coordinate a community effort to clean out the junk and turn the garage into a meeting place for teens.

Not only did the CRT agree to the proposal, they found funds to do some of the finish work—putting in drywall and adding a bathroom and kitchenette. The teens themselves participated in the painting and decorating of their new home and couldn't be happier with the results. They've even included a bathroom wall of inspirational graffiti.

Additionally, Zink and Strauser were instrumental in equipping the teens' garage with vehicles for education and entertainment: computer terminals and software, video games and pool tables, chess sets and decks of cards. Many items were donated by people or organizations who supported the idea of the Wolf Creek Teen Center.

Adult volunteers see that the drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free policy is strictly enforced, and distribute healthy snacks that have been provided through donations. The real measure of success: Whenever the doors are open, teens hang "out" inside.

GAINING GROUND

Those without children at home have also benefited from the school-and-community efforts. Many have given something back. As part of a dance and theater troupe called *Those Wolf Creek People*, Laurie Robertson and two fellow artists received a Commission on Children and Families grant allocated by the Boys and Girls Club to provide dance workshops at the school. For children who may not even have a television set at home, *Those Wolf Creek People* were a real hit. The group continues to organize theater productions in which community members take the stage.

Robertson was also one of the first adults to take advantage of the computer classes offered after hours at Wolf Creek Elementary. The skills she acquired there enabled her to generate computer spreadsheets for her husband Ronald's truck-driving business, which allows him to spend more time on the job generating profits which, in turn, help to stimulate the local economy.

And the Robertsons aren't the only small-business owners who have benefited. The CRT has used a portion of Enterprise Community funds to offer low-interest loans to small business owners who can't obtain traditional bank financing.

According to the CRT's O'Neal, "We're like the old-fashioned banker who knows people and their reputation." And the strategy is working. Thus far, the effort has funded nine small business loans to community members, and timely payments are rolling in. Some of the businesses have even created new jobs in the community.

Last year, the CRT itself started a small business to generate income for the years ahead, when Enterprise Community funds are no longer available. The business involves shipping specialty fencing (designed to keep out deer) from a family-owned company in Pennsylvania to customers in the western United States. Already, the business has expanded into its own warehouse.

Indeed, the combined efforts of both school and community in Wolf Creek and Sunny Valley are gaining ground.

Inch by inch, step by step, residents are beginning to make real strides toward improving the health of their community. There's still a long, uphill climb before economic stability is attained and the community is able to support itself. But, as McManus attests, "This is a real 'can do' community." And folks in these parts have a great deal of experience climbing mountains. ■

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

PERSONABLE APPROACH TO PROBLEM-SOLVING BRINGS A WARM, SMALL-TOWN FEELING TO URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS.

BY CATHERINE PAGLIN

ILLUSTRATION: CHRISTOPHER STINE

PORTLAND, Oregon—Vicky Martell works behind the scenes—in outer northeast Portland, just off one of the city's rawest commercial thoroughfares, on a mostly deserted second floor above a red brick vocational high school, at the end of a hallway piled with boxes.

Here Martell plies her trade as a community organizer. She doesn't grab headlines, rouse rabble, file lawsuits, or call press conferences. Hers is the unsung task of oiling social service machinery—improving programs by connecting people to other people, information, ideas, and opportunities.

Martell coordinates one of Multnomah County's eight Caring Communities. These collaborative programs are all dedicated to a goal of 100 percent high school completion. Funded in part by the county, with matching dollars from a variety of other public programs and private supporters, Caring Communities involve participants from social service agencies and schools, as well as neighbors who have energy to share.

"We're not necessarily about creating more programs. We want to make existing programs better through service integration and collaboration," says Martell, an energetic 28-year-old. Through discussion and information-sharing, Caring Community members form "action teams" around issues—mentoring, healthy activities for youth during nonschool times, violence prevention, truancy—that are directly or indirectly linked to a child's ability to finish high school and begin work or further education.

The Caring Communities are loosely based on high school attendance areas. Martell's territory—Grant/Madison—takes in 11,000 students in two Portland high schools, four middle schools, and 12 elementary schools. It stretches from the inner city out east to the 82nd Avenue commercial strip; from the industrial area at the north to leafy Laurelhurst at the south. Its residents live in stately homes along the sweeping curves of Alameda Ridge, in unheated campers on Northeast Killingsworth, and everywhere in between.

"I feel like by developing Caring Communities around high school attendance areas we're trying to recreate what already exists in small towns. We are trying to get back that small-town feeling," says Martell, who speaks wistfully of the previous summer she spent working in eastern Oregon.

Faces of people she met at a recent church social adorn her office wall. There's smiling, white-haired Eunice who likes to cook and bake and wants to learn quilting. There's A.J., a slim teenage boy who's good at basketball and interested in history. There's beefy, bearded, T-shirt-wearing Dale—proud father, and satisfied customer of the local convenience store—curly forelock falling from his otherwise shaved head. He's flanked by two beaming little girls holding potted flowers.

"I talked to 40 neighbors, all ages and all races," says Martell. She and staff from Lutheran Family Services also photographed these folks, surveyed them, and gave each a plant donated by a local nursery. The joint effort, which has been repeated in other neighborhoods, is called "Community Snapshots."

BUILDING A BASE

Getting out into the community helps Martell build a base of neighbors. Researchers would call what she does "creating a community asset map." To Martell, it just makes good sense. "What this does for me is I know that Eunice is good at cooking and baking, so if we ever have an activity involving cooking and baking we could call Eunice," she says.

Just such a conjunction in Martell's mental database (she keeps an electronic one as well) resulted in one of her most successful community-building efforts to date.

At one of many meetings that fill her calendar, she crossed paths with former Portland School Board member Bill Scott, now Oregon Economic Development Director. Scott lives and works elsewhere, but attends church in Portland's Irvington neighborhood in the Grant High School attendance area.

"He came over and handed me his card with his home number on it and said: 'I'm interested in my church becoming connected to your Caring Community. I'm interested in doing something with my church,'" says Martell.

She tucked the card away. Six months later a member of another church—a former teacher—approached her for the same reason. Martell asked if that church, also in the Irvington neighborhood, would like to host a lunch for neighborhood pastors. Representatives from five churches, including Scott's and the former teacher's, came to the meeting Martell dubbed "Pizza with the Pastors."

"It's a delightful idea," says Portland Public Schools' Pat Burk, Assistant to the Superintendent. "It takes a really creative person to take a simple idea and snowball it."

Snowball it did. Out of the lunch meetings grew Faith in Youth, an action team that now has 15 core members. In September, the group organized a Back to School Fair attended by more than 650 students from more than nine schools. Organizers and sponsors checked kids for head lice and lead poisoning, sold low-priced bicycle helmets, dispensed immunizations, and gave away school supplies and alarm clocks to help students get back to school on time and prepared to learn. A Grant High School student and teacher organized a talent show.

After its efforts to get the year off to a good start, Faith in Youth is looking for ongoing ways churches can support schools and families in the Grant area. "This was seen as the first action of a long-term partnership. It wasn't a one-shot deal," says Mark Knutsen, pastor of Augustana Lutheran Church. One idea is for churches to provide activities for children on teacher inservice and planning days. Another is to help parents navigate through the annual flood of program flyers to plan their children's summer schedule.

Martell quietly supports Faith in Youth by helping the meeting facilitator draw up the agenda, taking minutes, and lining up just the right outside person to attend a particular meeting. "I try to make it easy for them to be the visionary people," she says. She also makes sure that the good feelings and intentions generated at meetings don't evaporate from lack of follow through, says Knutsen.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

When the Caring Communities began forming in 1991, the schoolhouse doors did not immediately swing open. "Sometimes the hardest thing was to engage school people or to have them understand that it was good for the community to be involved," says Maxine Thompson, coordinator of The Leaders Roundtable, an ad hoc group of county leaders from business, education, government, and the nonprofit sector. The Leaders Roundtable started the Caring Communities as part of its effort to help poor and minority youth succeed in school and society.

But that early resistance seems to be giving way. Thompson explains, "As the schools lost resources [to budget cuts], they began to see the Caring Communities as a vehicle to bring resources back into the schools."

The Caring Community coordinators enable school principals to reach out into the community and become more involved, Burk says, explaining why the program appeals to the district.

James Brannon, Principal of Whitaker Middle School, sees the Caring Community performing dual roles: outreach arm and funnel for resources.

"Vicky [Martell] seems to have her hands in just about everything that could help the school," says Brannon. "I rely on her to keep me apprised of discussions around the city. She's a very valuable resource." He also praises the Caring Community's role in making the school's new Family Resource Center a reality: "They've been at the table since the planning began," he says. "I remember when this was just a thought."

Opening Whitaker's Family Resource Center in 1998 after three years of planning is one of the Grant/Madison Caring Community's most tangible achievements. The center is a collaborative partnership between the county's departments of Health and of Community and Family Services, Whitaker's administrators and counselors, the state's Adult and Family Services, and Portland Parks and Recreation, among others. It offers health, education, and social services to children and families, all in one convenient location, with the school at the center of the service hub.

Establishing family resource centers was a first accomplishment for many of the Caring Communities. Each collaborative, however, has its own particular emphases. East County Caring Community, for instance, which takes in three entire school districts, focuses heavily on early childhood intervention.

"By the time a child is truant and hanging out in Pioneer Square [a popular gathering place in downtown Portland], you have your work cut out for you," says Lorena Campbell, East County Caring Community Director. "We chose a long-range focus of providing the services to young children and their families that would allow them to be successful and maintain success, rather than remedial programs."

PHOTO BY CATHERINE PAGLIN

Through the East County Caring Community, Head Start, the county health department, the school districts, and others cooperate to put on an annual developmental screening for children ages birth through five.

"The money it saves in staff and planning time is really significant," says Campbell. "What we really do is give the widest range of services for the least amount of money. No one has to dip into extra pots." This year more than 300 children were screened. Parents have to fill out only one set of forms to have children checked for immunizations, hearing, speech, fine and gross motor development, vision, and anemia. Through the screening, Head Start identifies younger children most in need of its program. Other agencies in the Caring Community's early childhood action team locate older children who need early intervention so they can start kindergarten ready to learn.

After the screening, the service providers in the early childhood action team go over the files to make sure they follow up on problems. The agencies either provide the assistance or, with parents' permission, notify the school. "We never just hand the parents information and say, 'See ya,'" says Campbell.

The Caring Communities are by nature low profile. They try to support the efforts of other groups and help them work together, not compete with them for funding or recognition. For instance, nowhere

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in the publicity or press coverage of the Back to School Fair was the Grant/Madison Caring Community mentioned. "I think you are most effective when you say, 'Who cares who gets the credit? Let's just get it done,'" says Martell.

The devotion to work rather than glory has its downside. "We struggle to try to point people in the direction of the Caring Communities as a place to go when you want to do work with schools," says Thompson. Well-established networks like the Caring Communities sometimes get bypassed in a political world where elected officials prefer to start their own initiatives. "There may be less interest in supporting something that somebody else started," says Thompson.

External forces are not the only challenge. When there is staff or steering committee turnover, Caring Communities risk losing their sense of direction and institutional memory. Conflicts in leadership style can arise between the coordinator and the chair of the steering committee. Sometimes a person comes to the group with an agenda and drops out when the group or coordinator does not want to take on a particular project.

Yet those in the know sing the praises of this deliberately low-key approach. "None of us can operate in isolation," says Chris Bekemeier of Lutheran Family Services. "The Caring Community provides a link so we're doing things together on a local level."

"The Caring Communities are an incredible bargain," says Burk. "The coordinators are some of the most hard-working people. They work on a shoe string, put in very long hours, and do tremendous work."

MEETINGS AND MORE

On a recent Thursday, Martell's long hours begin when she arrives at 7:15 a.m. at a high-rise near downtown for a Caring Community Steering Committee meeting. This is a group that oversees all eight of the Caring Communities. Despite the early hour and lack of coffee and donuts, the conference room is packed. It's the first meeting after the summer break. All the big agencies and supporters of the Caring Communities are there—from city, county, school districts—61 people to discuss a new county truancy initiative.

When the meeting ends at 8:45 a.m., Martell jumps in her brown 1986 Jetta and drives five miles to Whitaker Middle School for another meeting at the Family Resource Center. She comes bearing gifts from the first meeting—in addition to a promising resume there's information about an immunization clinic, a reading program in an area with a population like Whitaker's, and a head lice resource center. "I get the information and give it out right away," she says.

Four families are on the agenda. Their problems include difficulty securing eligibility for Aid to Dependent Children, poor school attendance, and fighting at school. Martell, the Family Resource Center coordinator, a welfare worker, a state protective services worker, and representatives from the Police Activities League, a housing agency, and the city's parks and recreation department zero in on ways to help these families solve the complex problems that may not have simple solutions.

It's at meetings like this one and church socials and neighborhood forums that Martell takes the community pulse. "I listen for the issues that bubble up," she says. Lately she's hearing about head lice, grandparents doing parenting, truancy, and a lack of recreational facilities in the Madison area.

From Whitaker, Martell heads back toward the center of town to St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church on a quiet neighborhood corner. A lunch meeting with Faith in Youth begins with a prayer. The group reviews the Back to School Fair, noting how it can be improved next year, and follows with a rich discussion of ways they can keep focused on building community, beyond hosting events.

In the afternoon Martell is back at her office at the far edge of the Grant/Madison area, typing up the meeting notes and sending them out, answering the eight phone calls on her voice mail, most of them requests for information.

During a week filled with meetings, phone calls, and paperwork, Martell recharges with some hands-on volunteer work. "Otherwise I'll go crazy," she says. Fluent in Spanish, she mentors a nine-year-old Spanish-speaking girl who is unsure of her English but was told at a previous school that it was bad to speak her own language. "We speak a lot of *Spanglish*," says Martell.

"Are the Caring Communities making a difference?" asks Thompson. She wants to know and she's pushed for an evaluation, anticipating it will bring about learning and improvement. She's aware it will have limitations. "The factors that influence kids staying in school are so complex," she says, "that it is very difficult to point to any one thing that happened. And because the Caring Communities are more catalysts and facilitators —bringing people to the table—and less

See COMMUNITIES, Page 52

If a school-community partnership sounds like a good idea for your neighborhood, how do you move from idea to action? What program model would work best in your community? The following publications walk readers through the steps involved in getting a collaboration up and running.

IS YOUR COMMUNITY A GLASS HALF FULL, OR HALF EMPTY? In *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 1993), authors John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight share their optimistic bias. Every community, they assert, is a place filled with talents and gifts. You just have to know where to look to find your community's strengths.

The authors focus primarily on developing the local capacity in urban areas, particularly in inner cities where middle-income manufacturing jobs have been lost in recent decades. If local residents are lacking education and job skills, they may feel powerless, the authors acknowledge. Kretzmann and McKnight illustrate how change is possible if residents are willing to join in the struggle to rebuild "from the inside out." Local residents, local associations, and local institutions are the foundations for building lasting change.

Kretzmann and McKnight use an accessible style to explain research-based concepts about community building. They show why a more traditional approach has left many poor communities feeling "needy," with residents typically reduced to the status of clients awaiting services from outside experts. They make a convincing case for why this approach has led to fragmented services and a lack of connection at the local level. Rather than looking at a community in terms of its needs, they suggest focusing on local assets: What are the strengths of a place? How can we tap these assets, and build on them, to improve the community? The authors show how to "map" local assets, how to build on existing relationships, and how to release the power of individuals, associations, and organizations to become more active contributors to the life of the community.

The authors go into detail to suggest ways to "release the power" of local associations and organizations. Together with individuals, associations are the basic community-building tools of local neighborhoods. In low-income neighborhoods, however, residents and outsiders often make the mistake of assuming that associations are scarce. Kretzmann and McKnight offer evidence that suggests even the poorest communities are rich in associations. They describe a lower-income Chicago neighborhood where researchers found more than 150 local associations, ranging from service clubs to merchant groups to neighborhood choirs. How to find existing associations and enlist their support for community building? This workbook outlines an inexpensive and quick research approach: using printed sources (such as newspapers); talking to people at local institutions; and conducting a telephone survey.

The real strength of this book may lie in the hundreds of examples of collaboration sprinkled across the pages: the inner-city church that "adopts" a public school, providing literacy tutoring to students; the artists who work with disabled persons to create a community mural; the elementary school students who collect oral histories from seniors living in a public housing project; the police officers who teach conflict resolution skills to at-risk teens. Those seeking inspiration will discover a wealth of ideas that have worked to rebuild and revive other communities, both large and small.

Building Communities from the Inside Out ($20) is one of several community-building tools available from ACTA Publications, 4848 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60640.

WHY DO SOME COLLABORATIONS SUCCEED, while others fizzle? *Collaboration: What Makes It Work, A Review of Research Literature on Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration* (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1992) sifts through the research to deliver some practical information.

This report, written by Paul W. Mattessich and Barbara R. Monsey, begins with a working definition of collaboration: "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals." Then, the authors identify and discuss 19 keys to success in collaborations formed by human service, government, and other nonprofit agencies.

For example, they explain why it's important for members of a collaborative group to feel "ownership" of both the way the group works and the results or product of the work. They look at the factors related to communication, such as how often members communicate and how well information flows. They explain the wisdom of partners investing time to get better acquainted.

The authors also discuss how to use these 19 factors at different stages along the way to building a successful collaboration. During the planning stages, the factors provide a checklist. Is your collaboration building in the factors that will breed success? Can planning steps be taken to improve? Once a collaborative effort is underway, the factors can be useful for making midcourse changes or adjustments.

Collaboration: What Makes It Work costs $14 and can be ordered from Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Publishing Center, 919 Lafond Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, or by phone, 1-800-274-6024.

Finding Their Own Place

WHAT WILL OUR RURAL COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS? That's a question that citizens in small towns all across the country are asking one another. *Finding Their Own Place* (ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1997), by Bruce A. Miller and Karen J. Hahn, suggests that it might be wise to ask the same question of young rural people.

Finding Their Own Place describes the experiences of three small towns in the Northwest—Broadus and Saco, Montana, and Methow Valley, Washington. All three operate successful school-to-work programs that involve youth in the life of their communities. Their stories challenge the notion that rural youth lack opportunities for meaningful learning experiences close to home. They also illustrate how the energy and vitality of young people can advance community development.

The case studies describe economic hardships that many rural communities face, yet also celebrate the innovation of people at home in remote and isolated places. In Saco, Montana, for instance, a community of about 250 people, children in grades K-12 routinely use an electronic network, and teachers tap resources via satellite downlink.

As the authors report, "some rural communities have turned the seemingly impossible into success stories for youth and their communities. They have capitalized on their local strengths—small size, sense of community, pride of place."

The book costs $12 and can be ordered by phone, 1-800-624-9120.

POWERFUL SCHOOLS, A COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM serving a low-income Seattle neighborhood, has an established track record as a model that works to uplift student achievement and strengthen bonds between community and school (see Page 24). *Powerful Schools Handbook: Starting and Running a Collaborative School Improvement Program* (Court Street Press, 1995) shares the nuts and bolts of how this program really functions. The workbook outlines every step, from getting a project off the ground to finding a steady flow of funds and sufficient number of volunteers to keep it running smoothly.

Specific programs are described in detail, such as one-on-one mentoring, community schools, and parent involvement programs. Written by staff and volunteers from Powerful Schools, the contents mix longer, how-to articles with short tips and specific suggestions.

In the spirit of sharing, the book concludes with examples of forms and brochures that can easily be adapted to fit other programs. These examples take the guesswork out of designing an evaluation form, a job description, or a brochure to recruit volunteers.

Powerful Schools Handbook can be ordered for $19.95 plus $2 for handling from Powerful Schools, 3301 S. Horton Street, Seattle, WA 98144.

MAPPING
COMMUNITY
ASSETS
WORKBOOK

RURAL EDUCATION SPECIALISTS FROM THE NORTHWEST LABORATORY have been engaged in a long-term project to develop the local capacity in five pilot sites across the Northwest. The lessons learned in these real-world applications are highlighted in a series of workbooks, *Strengthening Community Education: The Basis for Sustainable Community Renewal.* The first two books in a series of four are now available.

Building Partnerships Workbook by Diane Dorfman (NWREL, 1998) is a hands-on guide to launching a collaborative community development project. The book introduces basic concepts about communities, focusing indepth on the importance of relationships within a geographic setting. The interactive approach engages readers to list their own relationships and examine which bonds forge a sense of community.

Dorfman applies community-building concepts specifically to rural places, pointing out the challenges, but also the strengths, of rural communities. She stresses the significance of the school in rural locales to explain why school-community collaborations benefit all ages.

This is a book intended to be *used.* The pages invite readers to write down their thoughts. The concepts lead naturally to conversations between friends and neighbors. And through lively, focused dialogue, the book explains, the real work of building community takes place.

Mapping Community Assets Workbook by Diane Dorfman (NWREL, 1998) takes readers step-by-step through the process of identifying strengths in their communities. The book begins on a personal level, asking readers to list their own assets—not only tangible goods, but also the relationships that enhance their lives. Then, the lens opens up to take stock of the assets of the community, with whatever is most *special* about the place at the center of the "asset map." Readers learn how to design a questionnaire to find the assets scattered throughout their community and bring them into the open, for everyone's benefit.

Copies of the workbooks are available from NWREL, (503) 275-9498 or 1-800-547-6339, ext. 498. *Building Partnerships* costs $12.80, *Mapping Community Assets* costs $10.30.

—Suzie Boss

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Financial aid is just the start.

The Ford Scholars Program and the Ford Opportunity Program for Single Parents are different from most other college scholarship programs.

They differ because the late Kenneth Ford, founder of Roseburg Forest Products, developed a clear idea of what he wanted his program to be, who it should serve, and why; and later Hallie Ford did the same with the scholarship program she founded for single parents. As a staff member of the Ford Family Foundation and, eventually, director of both scholarship programs, I had the thrill of listening to the Fords express their hopes and ideas. It took months, with numerous drafts and revisions, before each program was ready to launch. Kenneth Ford once remarked, "We want to help those who other programs may not want." Hallie Ford said she wanted to focus on "this very special group of people that has more hurdles to jump than most if they are to complete college."

The Ford Scholars Program, now in its fifth year, has selected 443 Oregonians ranging in age from 17 to 51. The Opportunity Program, in its third year, has selected 90 recipients from age 17 to 46. The Ford Family Foundation provides these students, studying in 33 different Oregon institutions, with 90 percent of their unmet financial need (after other sources of support are deducted). Support is limited to 90 percent because both founders felt "providing free rides" was a bad thing, and wanted each person to contribute a part of his or her educational costs.

These programs differ from most others because of the amount of interest taken in the scholars and the partnerships developed with other individuals and organizations.

The interest taken in each recipient is quite unusual. It begins with the selection process, which requires all finalists to be interviewed by a team of three or four qualified persons.

At an annual luncheon for each program, each recipient is invited to attend with two guests. At each table is a host who is a Ford family member, director, staff person of the foundation, or someone knowledgeable about the program.

In the fall, each Ford Scholar receives a several-page letter from the director. Along with basic program information, it includes topics such as "managing 24 hours in one's day," "being sure to think for oneself rather than just following the crowd," or, "controlling procrastination." Similar letters are sent in the winter and spring. For the smaller group of Opportunity Program people, personal contacts are made through periodic phone calls rather than letters. In each case, regular communication during the academic year is encouraged.

Academic grades are reviewed at the end of each term. Those who might be struggling receive a phone call or letter of support and encouragement. If more attention seems needed, the director will maintain weekly personal contact with the scholar.

Each summer, a separate weekend conference is held at an Oregon resort for each class of Ford Scholars. Ford family members, directors, and staff also attend. Each conference has a theme and makes use of outside presenters. The freshman class conference focuses on "Building Leadership through Relationships." For sophomores, it's "Taking Initiative in Solving Problems." The conferences are intended to provide group learning experiences for each class, and to help students sense that they are part of a very special and permanent group. It is now evident that most scholars do feel they belong to a special group. They regularly write saying how important the human elements of the program are to them. One recent graduate put it this way: "When I started I knew the financial help was critical, but it was not till I had read several of the on-target letters and attended my first conference that I realized this was more than money—it was and is about people who didn't even know me, caring about me and my success and showing it so beautifully."

Each class is provided with a handbook, phone numbers they can use to connect with the people administering the program, and e-mail addresses for all scholars so they can easily contact each other.

When Ford Scholars complete their baccalaureate degrees, they choose either a Ford Scholar ring or lapel pin, and become members of the alumni association. The activities of the alumni are currently being developed, but it is clear that there will be a newsletter, periodic gatherings, and opportunities for those who are interested to participate in the interview process for new scholars, speak at awards luncheons, and connect with beginning Ford Scholars. Data on each graduate is being maintained, so that longitudinal studies can be carried out.

Finally, a recent decision makes it possible for those with outstanding undergraduate records to apply for up to a two-year extension to do graduate work.

While there is still room to strengthen these programs, evidence documents their effective functioning. Such a positive statement can be made primarily because of the formal and informal partnerships that have developed. These include:

- Voluntary giving of time by Ford family members, foundation directors, staff, and others who attend every awards luncheon and all summer conferences and show scholars that they are personally and genuinely interested in their success
- The helpful contract relationship that exists with the Oregon State Scholarship Commission to do preliminary applicant screening, maintain records, provide daily administrative support, and assist with logistics for the conferences and other gatherings
- Assistance of 10 Oregonians—educators, community leaders, and business persons—who conduct hundreds of interviews throughout the state with the applicants who become finalists for both scholarship programs
- People who are presenters at the summer conferences, ranging from management trainers to a United States Senator, and from university professors to the Oregon Secretary of State
- Hundreds of high school and community college counselors and agency staff who tell likely candidates about the two programs and urge them to consider applying
- Financial aid staff at nearly every college and university in Oregon who work patiently with Ford Scholars and Opportunity Program people to calculate their level of need
- Those who informally hear about the programs, or have family members who participate, and then at the right moment suggest to likely candidates that they apply

> Nothing is more fundamental in building community than taking the time to develop honest and caring relationships with and for others.

Because of the vision of the two founders, the Ford Scholars and the Ford Opportunity Program exist and have the financial resources necessary. Because of the staff of the foundation and the Oregon State Scholarship Commission, the two programs are fully implemented and improving each year. And because of the participation of the many other partners, more and more of those who should be served by these programs are indeed learning about them.

Next September, 140 more students will attend Oregon colleges and universities because of these permanent programs, and the same will be true each year into the future. So in the next 25 years, 3,500 Oregonians will become Ford Scholars and Ford Opportunity Program participants. That will have significant impact in this region. And because of their relationships, they will make a significant impact on each other far into the future.

Two things that Kenneth Ford and Hallie Ford knew from the beginning undergird these programs. First, no investment has greater potential return for society than investments in human beings. Second, nothing is more fundamental in building community than taking the time to develop honest and caring relationships with and for others. One Ford Scholar "put the icing on the cake" when he said, "Because they have such a caring interest in me, I definitely will do more to help others in my life."

Five years of working with the Fords and with the people participating in the two programs have provided me with one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. I suppose this is so because I found myself in such complete harmony with their visions, then had the joy of seeing those visions become reality.

Charles U. Walker was President of Linfield College from 1975 to 1992. From 1993 to November 1998, he was Director of the Ford Scholars and the Ford Opportunity Program and remains involved as a Ford Family Foundation Trustee. ■

By helping students see how they fit into the community, we all stand to gain.

While I was in England recently, the British government called for "citizenship education" in secondary schools to increase the knowledge, skills, and values relevant to the practice of participatory democracy. In other words, to arm young people with the capacity to be socially responsible citizens. It made me wonder: How well do our educational programs prepare students for community participation in the United States?

In this country, much is made of the declining state of communities. All we have to do is turn on the news or pick up a newspaper to read about youth problems. A bigger tragedy, however, is hidden behind the headlines. Many children first learn about community in a chaotic setting where they are exposed to a horrendous example of how to get along with others.

A child who grows up in a dysfunctional or distressed family may arrive at school without having acquired a basic sense of community. The teacher must create a bridge across the child's actual home situation to a larger home, where the child can imagine belonging to the community-at-large. Within this bigger world, the child can discover what it means to create, to explore, and to participate as a citizen.

When the task of creating "socially responsible active citizens" takes into consideration the living conditions of many of today's youth, then it is imperative that the community join with schools in building a strong foundation on which these young people can grow beyond their personal circumstances. This is a monumental task, and requires us to expand the definition of community involvement in schools.

By strengthening the bond between school and community, we can provide youth with opportunities to better understand how they fit into both the local community and the greater biophysical environment. A practical, experiential education, such as the Discovery Team I had a chance to observe in action in the White Pass School District in rural Washington, offers a way to teach both individual and team lessons. Collaborative learning opportunities engender an understanding that personal welfare depends on group welfare. Through such experiences, students learn that, regardless of differences of opinion, people can and must find ways to work and live together. Personal attributes such as reliability, responsibility, perseverance, sociability, tolerance, and flexibility are the basis for public life. These values are learned through participation in actual events in specific places. Participation in learning about the local community can provide those real-life events that can enable students to become "native to a place."

In White Pass, teachers have seen this hands-on approach to learning work wonders for at-risk youth. A "location-specific curriculum" can be initiated in one class, in a group of coordinated classes, as an after-school activity, or as a summer program. It can be built around local traditions, rooted in the uniqueness of the place, and include learning about the local and regional ecology, economy, and culture. Such a curriculum enables students to become knowledgeable inhabitants, especially when their involvement entails learning local history, stories, legends, rituals, and practices that define the community and what it means to be part of it. This kind of learning nurtures the democratic spirit, strengthening and sustaining our communities.

How can schools promote the community as classroom? The learning opportunities are boundless. Discussion of the interplay between people and their environment over time and space provides an opportunity to integrate the study of history, geography, landscape, literature, ecology, economics, land use and planning, and government. Community study provides an opportunity for several teachers to coordinate across the curriculum to create a more holistic approach to study that is grounded in real life and can have immediate practical application. It also provides an opportunity for local residents to share what they know about the community. Students can learn about social action through service learning by getting involved in current community issues or a community development activity as part of their classroom work.

A first step in getting such a program started is to organize a community study, similar to the one undertaken in the White Pass School District. This might entail a series of community forums where local community members are invited to come into the classroom, or to come to an evening open house to discuss some aspect of community history or culture. Community members may want to bring photographs or other memorabilia to help facilitate conversation with students. Media classes may want to do videotaped oral histories with elders who have considerable local knowledge. Government classes may want to study the changes in local policy or governance over time and see how external events have affected local decisions. Art classes may want to look at how local artists portray the local area, what media they use, and what images their work conveys about the area.

Students might consider these questions: If I had moved away from this community 100 years ago and came back today, what would I notice that is different? What changes would I notice if I had left 50 years ago? What things have changed in the last 25 years? These are integrative questions that cross disciplinary boundaries. Answering these questions could entail oral histories with local residents or one-time residents who have moved away, photo analysis, archival research that might include looking through old phone books, school yearbooks, newspapers, and other materials that help tell the story of a community. Students could also identify an issue of concern or importance and conduct research to better understand underlying causes, implications, and potential solutions.

Community study, incorporating a "school-to-work" learning model, offers a way to engage at-risk students. Students who have not shown an interest in school or who have had problems with a traditional curriculum may suddenly become excited about doing a photo-journal project that documents important features of their community, or that depicts a current issue of interest or concern. They may want to take an indepth look at some particular topic of interest, such as historic flooding and community preparedness, by interviewing residents and government officials and doing an analysis of historical documents. Counselors in White Pass shared these observations about how the program affected students: "Dealing with the public did wonders for them. It showed them that they could do something. They learned people skills and gained significantly in self-confidence and assertiveness with people."

Using the community as a learning environment helps students integrate the skills and knowledge they are learning in the classroom. As one of the White Pass teachers commented, "It is truly the only way to provide applied learning of the concepts that are taught in the classroom." Maybe most important, however, are the lessons of self-confidence, life skills, and an appreciation and understanding of place. As students engage in learning about and being active in their community, they make personal observations: "I can look back and say, 'Look what I did!'" "I learned I can work with a lot of people to come up with a lot of information and put it into one report." "I learned that I could go up to people and interview them without being shy or embarrassed." "It gave me a new understanding and appreciation of the rich history that our community is built on. I never did comprehend before this summer what a huge difference the mills and tourism were."

Communities and schools may never have needed each other as much as they do now. Many schools are coping with reduced budgets for counselors and support services, tattered texts and substandard equipment, and elimination of funding for the arts. Yet at the same time, they are expected to work toward increased test and achievement scores. Community members can lay the groundwork for real improvement by helping to turn their community into a classroom. They can beat the bushes to find funding and sponsors, leaving teachers to focus on other aspects of teaching.

The students who find that their community supports them, listens to them, and promotes their ideas, thoughts, and creativity will have a better chance of becoming socially responsible and productive members of society. And the community will be all the better for it.

Linda Kruger is Research Social Scientist with the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station in Seattle, Washington. Her research focus is community-forest relationships. Her doctoral dissertation included learning as a participant in the White Pass School District Discovery Team Community Self-Assessment project. ■

LETTERS

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

In the edition entitled "Taking Off: A Teacher's Guide to Technology" [Spring 1998], one of the major themes addressed the subject of teacher training, mentoring, learning, and applying computer technology in order to effectively bring it to the classroom. In the articles "Behind the Mystique," "The Promise of Technology," and "Conquering the Computer," as well as others, one theme recurs over and over, i.e. *teacher* training, *teacher* mentoring, *teacher* fears of learning this new "complex" technology—always what the *teachers* must do. I was struck by the almost total absence of what the teachers' "leaders" are or should be doing to assist the teachers in this great new endeavor.

If we believe that computer technology is a true "sea change" in the world of education, as I believe it is, then perhaps there ought to be more effort expended by the "leaders" at actually leading. By leaders, I mean the principals, administrators, and district superintendents. I suspect that just as there are teachers who are lagging behind in learning about technology or are indifferent or opposed to it, there is an equivalent percentage of leaders who are somewhat "below the horizon" on this subject.

It is my belief that the best way to lead is to do just that—be in front and lead by example. If every superintendent, every administrator, and every principal actively learned, understood, and used computer technology in their own daily professional lives, what an example it would be to the teachers. Each of these leaders could actually assist, as the occasion presented itself, in this all-important activity of training/mentoring teachers in the application of technology in the classroom. I am sure there are many dedicated leaders who do just this, but I suspect there are some—or many—who don't "lead." For a leader, this is not acceptable.

Richard Pearl
Retired Lockheed contract manager
Bainbridge Island, Washington

TO OUR READERS

The "Letters" column is your corner of *Northwest Education*. We invite readers to share opinions and ideas about articles that appear in these pages. We also welcome your suggestions for topics you would like to read about in future issues. Write to us at *Northwest Education*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204. We look forward to hearing from you.

—The Editors

THE WORLD

Continued from Page 23

People have to be able to read and write and do arithmetic much more than they did then."

When Pauline Roberts, 83, was a young woman, she learned from her mother and other women in the village how to cut seal with the uluaq *(a curved blade that fits in the palm of the hand), how to make oil for heating and cooking, and to care for the meat. She also became skilled in crafts.*

"I learned how to make baskets, some small with lids and some large without lids, and grass mats," she explains. "I learned to make winter mittens and boots, handbags and slippers out of seal skin. I also learned how to make yo-yos. I learned how to use every part of the salmon."

Using her hands to demonstrate, she tells how she made salmon skinboots. She would carefully remove the skin from the salmon, wash it with soap and then hang it to dry. After it was completely dry, she would scrape the scales off and sew together several pieces of the strong parchment-like material to make tall, waterproof boots—valuable protection from the constant moisture of the delta.

"Our elders won't be here forever," says Samson Mann. "The Yup'ik tradition is important for kids to learn because it's part of our basic survival, our subsistence. At the same time, the world is coming to us. Kids need to keep up with both the traditional ways and the modern ways. Change is a good thing, too." ■

COMMUNITIES

Continued from Page 45

about programs, they may have greater impact on the effectiveness of other organizations."

"Good things happen, but it's hard to track who or what is responsible," says Martell. Some forces are too big to control directly. For example, in a strong economy more students drop out to go to work; in bad times they're more likely to stay in school, she points out. "Things like that we're never going to be able to tackle. But you have to have faith that what we do is good. And I do. I really believe in it." ■

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Spring issue
Safe Solutions: How to Keep Violence Out of Schools

Summer issue
Schools and the Arts: Drawing on a Larger Palette

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Schoolwide Reform: Changing Schools from the Ground Up

You are invited to send us article ideas,
identify places where good things are happening,
provide descriptions of effective techniques being used,
suggest useful resources, and submit letters to the editor.

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SPRING 1999
NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

NW

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COVER: A SEGMENT FROM ONE OF NEARLY 60 MEMORIAL QUILTS PIECED TOGETHER WITH SQUARES STITCHED AND PAINTED BY STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS AFTER THE TRAGIC SHOOTING IN SPRINGFIELD, OREGON, LAST YEAR. THE QUILTS ARE A "REMINDER THAT WE ARE INTERCONNECTED BEINGS," SAYS EUGENE RESIDENT ESTHER HUNTER, WHO LAUNCHED THE QUILT PROJECT.

PHOTO BY JUDY BLANKENSHIP

IN THIS ISSUE

Climate of Respect

y stepson Michael socked one of his best friends in fifth grade. A funny, curious boy with a passion for movies, rap, and jelly doughnuts, Mike* suffers from a severe learning disability. Despite several years of remedial summer school, night school, and tutoring, he'd fallen desperately behind his classmates. Kids in our tidy, middle-class neighborhood, where parents expect a lot from their children, had seen Mike's hopeless efforts to read and compute, and they pounced. They called him dummy and retard. They shoved him. They shunned him at lunch and recess.

"I *hate* my life!" he would say, miserably, at the end of the day.

The day he punched Gordon was the day he couldn't take it anymore. The kids were filing in from recess. "Hey, dummy," someone said to Mike. Other kids joined in. Then Mike heard Gordy say it, too. Gordy—who lives on our block, sleeps over at our house, plays our stereo, drinks our diet cola—called Mike a dummy. Hurt and betrayed, Mike flew at his friend. They wound up wrestling on the floor until a teacher broke up the fight and sent both boys to the office.

Every kid in school knew Mike was being teased and taunted. But the teachers and principal—all very caring people—were stunned to learn of it. As is often the case with bullying, the cutting words are hissed beyond teachers' earshot.

That was Mike's last day in that school. After giving him a battery of tests, the district found a perfect placement for him with other bright kids with learning disabilities. Mike is thriving. He hasn't caught up, but he's on his way. Best of all, he's OK with who he is. This kid who'd moaned that he would never amount to more than a garbage collector now wants to be an architect.

But what if Mike hadn't gotten the help he needed? In the last weeks before the fight, Mike's teacher called us several times, complaining that he was clowning around and disrupting class. Teachers everywhere spend huge chunks of their day trying to keep the lid on kids like Mike who are off-task, acting out, or otherwise out of sync with classmates. Everyone's education suffers. And minor disruptions can quickly become major incidents when ignored.

Kids learn best in a climate of respect—respect for who they are as individuals and for what they need as learners. They're safer, too. Children who form an emotional bond to their school are much less likely to lash out at classmates or staff than students who feel no such attachment, research suggests.

Schools around the Northwest are striving to make their schools havens of safety and unencumbered learning. In these pages, you'll read about schools that intervene early to steer kids away from disruptive and antisocial behavior. You'll visit schools that teach empathy—understanding others' feelings—along with skills for managing anger and resolving conflicts. You'll look in on communities that are weaving nets of support for at-risk youths before they tumble into trouble. We offer the latest findings on warning signs of violence. Finally, a school psychologist who helped manage last year's crisis in Springfield, shares the lessons she learned from that heartbreaking event.

—Lee Sherman

**The names of the boys have been changed to protect their privacy.*

STICKS AND

S T O N E S

NAME CALLING, PUT DOWNS, AND BULLYING DO HURT CHILDREN AND CREATE A CLIMATE THAT CAN THWART LEARNING AND BREED VIOLENCE

BY LEE SHERMAN

"Our schools, all of them, must be sanctuaries of safety and civility and respect."

—President Clinton, October 1998

"All students should be treated with dignity."

—Joe Furshong, Helena Public Schools, Montana

It started with a few remarks traded in the hallway at a Helena public school.

"What're *you* lookin' at, dork?"

"Nothin'."

"Well, stay outta my way, dork."

Every time the two boys met, friction sparked. Hurt and anger mounted.

One day while the boys waited for their bus home, the verbal sparring erupted into a shoving match. By the time the assistant principal rushed to the scene, the boys were pummeling one another. When one of the boys stumbled backward, she stepped between them. "Stop now!" she commanded, holding her arms out to block their contact. But the boy who had stumbled regained his balance and charged toward her and the second boy. Pulling a can of pepper spray from his pocket, he pressed the nozzle. The blast missed the other boy but hit the administrator's face, blurring her vision.

This kind of upward spiral of conflict plays out in schools everywhere, every day. The progression from words to blows—sometimes even to gunfire—has been dubbed the "escalation of aggression dance" by Joe Furshong, Director of Special Services for Helena Public Schools in Montana.

"The pattern I see oftentimes," says Furshong, "is stuff that seems little on the surface—put-downs, name calling, teasing—ends up being traumatizing to kids."

Furshong is a leader in the Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI), launched in 1995 to improve school climate statewide. Public officials, community leaders, parents, and educators were alarmed by the growing number of kids bringing severe emotional and behavioral problems to school. They wanted solutions for rising incidents of insubordination, aggression, truancy, drug use, and vandalism.

The same urgent concerns are shared across the region—not just in Helena, huddled on the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains, but also in Seattle, bustling on salty Puget Sound. And in Bethel, shivering on the windswept Alaskan tundra. And in Eugene, glistening in the wet Willamette Valley. In these and countless communities around the nation, people are striving to make their schools safe and civil. Schools are tightening up security measures, beefing up codes of conduct, linking up with outside agencies, drumming up parental support, hooking up kids with mentors, and folding antiviolence curricula into the overall educational program. Together, these strategies form a comprehensive approach, creating a warm school climate where children can learn in peace.

MBI—with funds from the Montana Board of Crime Control and the state Office of Public Instruction—zeroes in on the very heart of school climate: how students and staff treat each other.

The initiative encourages schools to develop "an ongoing process of compassion and consideration for the rights, feelings, and property of others—a process of creating a welcoming, positive atmosphere throughout our schools and communities."

Violence doesn't begin with punches or kicks. It begins with words. First, it's a put-down or an insult—calling someone a dummy, a fatso, a nerd, a wimp. Next are threats. Then comes the shove on the playground that leads to a fist in the face or a foot in the groin. The fear, intimidation, and anger kids cause when they taunt or hassle peers can spin quickly out of control. Suddenly, the weapon is not a cutting word but a knife strapped to a leg, a handgun stuffed in a backpack.

More often, victims of teasing and bullying suffer in silence. But the impact on their lives and schooling is very real. One in seven children is a bully or the target of a bully, according to the National Association of School Psychologists. Kids who are victimized by more aggressive or powerful peers have only recently gained the attention of researchers.

"Socially neglected children usually go unnoticed by their peers but may fall victim to bullying and suffer ill effects, such as low self-confidence, underachievement in school, and withdrawal," says the trainer's manual for the antiviolence curriculum Second Step. "In some cases, extended persecution has ended in suicide or violent retaliation on the part of victims."

Bullies are five times more likely than nonbullies to have a criminal record by age 30. While physical bullying—bopping another kid on the back of the head, for instance, or snatching his book bag—seems to decrease with age, "verbal abuse appears to remain constant," says Ron Banks in a 1997 ERIC Digest titled *Bullying in Schools*.

Bullying, which Banks defines as "physical or psychological intimidation (that) occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse," appears to cut across all the demographics of school size, place, and wealth. Bullies exist in schools big and small, urban and rural, rich and poor.

"Their targets tend to have lasting emotional scars and low self-esteem," *Education Daily* reported in October 1998. "Ten percent of eighth-grade students stay home at least one day a month for fear of another student."

RESOURCES

Peaceful Schools (1998), part of the By Request series of hot-topic booklets put out by the Northwest Laboratory, offers an overview of current research on school violence prevention, outlines some practical ideas for use in the classroom, and takes a look at what schools around the Northwest are doing to address this serious issue. After identifying existing problems and assessing school and community needs, write authors Jennifer Fager and Suzie Boss, schools should address a variety of issues on a schoolwide basis, including:

- **Physical plant**: The building should feel safe to students and staff. Entrances should be visible, hallways well lighted, and playgrounds monitored.
- **Organization**: Safe schools tend to have a strong sense of organization.

- **Discipline**: Safe schools deal with disruptive behavior early, fairly, and effectively. To feel respected, students need to perceive discipline as being fair, consistent, and clear. Disciplinary policies (such as zero tolerance for weapons, drugs, or alcohol) need to be age appropriate, clear, and repeatedly communicated to parents and students.
- **Norms**: Schools are well positioned to challenge social norms that reinforce violence and replace them with norms that prevent violence.
- **Crisis response**: Advance planning allows a school to respond quickly in the event of a crisis.
- **Teacher training**: Inservice training helps teachers understand the theory behind a violence-prevention curriculum.
- **Instructional delivery**: Among the many options are prepackaged curricula, training videos, speakers, and trainers.

The booklet *Peaceful Schools* is free from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. To receive a copy, write to NWREL, Planning and Program Development, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204, or call (503) 275-0666.

Bullying can have a grave impact on learning—a "chilling effect," in the words of Susan Limber and Maury Nation, writing in the April 1998 Juvenile Justice Bulletin put out by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). "Not only does bullying harm both its intended victims and the perpetrators," say Limber and Nation, "it also may affect the climate of schools and, indirectly, the ability of all students to learn to the best of their abilities."

"Bullying deprives children of their rightful entitlement to go to school in a safe, just, and caring environment," writes Nan Stein in *Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying* published jointly in 1996 by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and the National Education Association Professional Library. "Bullying interferes with children's learning, concentration, and desire to go to school."

A CHILLING EFFECT

Peer harassment has played a part in a number of recent high-profile school shootings and a thwarted massacre. In November, when Wisconsin authorities were tipped off to an elaborate plot to shoot 20 high school students, the five would-be assassins said they targeted kids who'd "made fun of us" and "picked on us." Sixteen-year-old Evan Ramsey, who killed a principal and classmate in Bethel, Alaska, in 1997, was "teased and taunted by fellow students as 'brain-dead' and 'retarded,'" according to the *Anchorage Daily News*. A friend of Evan's "recalled kids calling Ramsey 'spaz' and other degrading names," the newspaper reported. Other school shooters, too, have cited vengeance toward unkind peers as their motive.

These extreme cases are rare. Despite the recent string of school shootings that have grabbed headlines, very few students ever try to "get even" with guns. In fact, kids are carrying fewer weapons to school now than they were a few years ago. "Contrary to public perception, the percentages of students who report carrying a weapon or a gun to school has declined in recent years," states the first *Annual Report on School Safety*, published in 1998 by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Weapon-toting students dropped from 14 percent of males in 1993 to 9 percent in 1996, according to the *Annual Report*. (Only 2 percent of female students brought weapons to school during the same period.)

Nevertheless, many youths are afraid of their schoolmates. Nearly 10 percent of eighth-graders feel unsafe or very unsafe at school, and they fearfully avoid certain spots on campus. In 1984, the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that by the time kids get to high school, fully one-fourth of them fear victimization by peers. Males as a group feel more unsafe than females, a 1996 survey by the National Assessment of Educational Progress found. Among ethnic groups, Hispanic and American Indian students feel most fearful at school.

"While the school crime rate is decreasing," the *Annual Report* says, "students feel less safe at school. (This) climate of fear erodes the quality of any school."

LITTLE CONFRONTATIONS

An atmosphere of discourtesy and disrespect can give violence a toehold, say Jim Bryngelson and Sharon Cline of the CARE Initiative of Montana, creators of the "Violence Continuum" used by MBI. The continuum is topped by behaviors that shatter communities and make the evening news—hate crimes, rape, murder, suicide. Below that are sexual harassment, theft, drugs, vandalism, and fighting—the points at which schools typically intervene. But it is at the bottom of the continuum, with the bugging and badgering often overlooked in schools, where educators often can make the biggest impact, defusing conflict

NATIO
SAFE SCHOOLS RESOURCE CENTER

[illegible] ties and communities [illegible] have a [illegible] schools [illegible] National Safe Schools Resource Center [illegible] providing [illegible] schools and communities to help them create and maintain learning environments that are free [illegible] safe and [illegible] three-year grant [illegible] provision of the center [illegible] awarded to [illegible] by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. [illegible] believes the development of a safe school environment is an issue that cannot be isolated from general school improvement [illegible] Dr. Ethel [illegible] Executive Director [illegible] of the [illegible]

[illegible] ties to develop safe school plans, which will be implemented within the context of overall school improvement plans that embrace diversity, build resilience, and provide educational programming such as anger management, peer mediation, and conflict resolution. Research shows that schools demonstrating success through reform also demonstrate corresponding improvements in attendance, discipline, and drug problems, as well as violence. School-based programs can also be the cornerstone of comprehensive efforts to reduce violence in the community at large.

The most horrific incidents of school violence, such as those that have occurred in Oregon, Arkansas, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi, [illegible] the nation's attention and struck fear into schools everywhere. Schoolhouse shootings in the 1997–98 school year [illegible] teachers and stu[illegible]

[illegible] the nation [illegible] the day [illegible] that [illegible] in America [illegible] Samuel M. W[illegible] [illegible] those of President Clinton last summer when he said that in most schools it is the smaller acts of aggression, threats, scuffles, constant back talk — that take a terrible toll on the atmosphere of learning. The problems that schools and communities face in promoting, creating, and sustaining safe learning environments can be addressed through several approaches:

1. School policy
2. Early warning and prevention
3. Curriculum-based programs
4. Parental engagement
5. Mentoring
6. Physical facilities

Increasingly, combinations of these approaches are being promoted and used in comprehensive improvement models. The [illegible]

[illegible] parents and [illegible] to prevent [illegible] before they happen [illegible] 0131.

—Samantha Moores

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NAL

before it blows up.

"I think more attention has to be paid to what they call 'little confrontations' that gradually develop into more serious matters," says Kent Harding, Coordinator of School Safety in Bethel.

Too many educators, he says, shrug off teasing and bullying as "kids being kids." They reason that peer harassment is just part of growing up, and reflects wider community norms and attitudes that kids bring to school with them.

It's true that peer harassment has its origins outside schoolhouse walls. Children learn it from older siblings, sitcom stars, DJs, and family members. Sometimes, they even learn it from teachers. ("Unfortunately, there are some staff members who ridicule or belittle students," Furshong notes.) But if razzing is a learned behavior, so is respect. Schools have the power to shape social norms and steer students toward better behavior, research suggests.

"When you create a school climate or culture that doesn't tolerate disrespect," Furshong asserts, "kids buy into it. They make it their own ethic."

Drawing on effective-schools research, MBI trains local school-community teams to:

- Recognize and create community/school programs that effectively meet the needs of students and develop safe, orderly environments
- Improve the willingness of school and community personnel to respond proactively to the individual needs of students
- Extend the range and quality of services designed to assist students in developing social competence
- Provide school and community personnel with validated strategies for responding to challenging behavior
- Strengthen the ability of schools and community agencies to network and coordinate community resources
- Assist school and community agencies in developing effective policies and procedures addressing student behaviors

After going through MBI training, staff at Helena's C.R. Anderson Middle School adopted a number of new practices to improve school climate and encourage positive interactions. They posted teachers in hallways to greet students by name and meet them at classroom doors. They used positive reminders instead of punitive practices for minor infractions. They worked with probation officers to help kids who'd had a brush with the law slip smoothly back into school without losing credits. Results were dramatic. Hallway incidents that landed kids in the office plunged nearly in half between 1996-97 and 1997-98—from 170 to 92.

Antibullying programs and curricula can help educators and students create a more respectful school climate. But to be effective, they must be used schoolwide in tandem with other strategies, Banks cautions. "(Researchers) emphasize the need to develop whole-school bullying policies, implement curricular measures, improve the schoolground environment, and empower students through conflict resolution, peer counseling, and assertiveness training." (See sidebar on Page 10 for a sampling of antibullying curricula.)

In the 1993 publication *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*, antibullying pioneer Dan Olweus offers an approach for multilevel intervention. Steps for intervening at the building, classroom, and individual levels include:

- An initial questionnaire for students and adults that raises awareness of the problem and serves as a benchmark to measure improvements in school climate
- A schoolwide campaign to inform parents of the problem and enlist their support; avenues for communication are parent-teacher conference days, newsletters, and PTA meetings
- Classroom rules against bullying developed by teach-

ers and students; role-plays and other assignments exploring ways to resist bullying and assist victims

- Individualized interventions with bullies and victims; cooperative learning activities to reduce the social isolation victims suffer; and increased adult supervision at key times, such as lunch and recess

Schools that have used Olweus' program report a 50 percent reduction in bullying, according to Banks. Rates of truancy, vandalism, and theft have also dropped sharply, and overall school climate has improved markedly as a result of the program.

"Today, bullying is rightfully being recognized for what it is: an abusive behavior that often leads to greater and prolonged violence," write June Arnette and Marjorie Walsleben in *Combating Fear and Restoring Safety in Schools*, the April 1998 issue of the OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin. "Both bullies and their victims need help in learning new ways to get along in school."

GLORIFY PEACEMAKING

Noting that "violence prevention is more fundamental than a new curriculum ... or a metal detector," J. David Hawkins of the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group says peace depends on the "social environment of the school as a whole: of the policies and practices of school administrators that support and encourage a positive learning environment, and of the way teachers manage and teach in classrooms and on playgrounds."

In the 1998 publication *Violence in American Schools* (Cambridge University Press), Hawkins and his colleagues David Farrington and Richard Catalano identify four key ways schools can keep disruption, incivility, and violence at bay:

- Fostering social bonding and academic achievement: Kids who feel bonded to their neighborhood school and succeed academically have a powerful shield against disruptive and violent behavior, Hawkins argues. "Schools that fail to generate strong bonds to school in their students," he warns, "will be unable to counteract the competing influence of gangs and other social groups that reinforce violent behavior."
- Promoting norms of nonviolence: Formal rules of conduct are critical, but not sufficient to fostering a peaceful school climate, Hawkins writes. Schools also must work to influence "the informal norms and expectations for behavior that exist among the students themselves," he says.
- Teaching skills for living according to nonviolent norms: These skills are teachable, Hawkins says. High-quality violence-prevention and conflict-resolution curricula are valuable tools for teaching students to regulate their emotions, solve problems, and manage anger. But Hawkins cautions that skill building should be a part of a larger strategy for changing social norms.
- Eliminating firearms and other weapons: Kids have always had conflicts. But easy access to weapons has raised the stakes. Playground scuffles can explode into bloody nightmares. "The availability of firearms increases the risk that fighting will result in serious injury or death," Hawkins notes. "Metal detectors in schools may help to reduce this risk in and around schools." He cites evidence that metal detectors do in fact reduce the number of guns and other weapons on school grounds.

Hawkins' list centers on the idea of "glorifying peacemaking"—a counterweight to the shoot-'em-up imagery and macho role models that surround children today, Marilyn Richen of Portland told Oregon Public Broadcasting in December. To Hawkins' list, Richen adds a fifth key to preventing school violence: "noticing when we have troubled kids and connecting those kids to the right services." Richen, who coordinates prevention programs for the Portland School

1998
school

The Annual Report on School Safety: 1998, the first report in a planned series by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, offers a nationwide overview of the scope of school crime and describes actions schools and communities can take to address this critical issue.

Steps for developing and implementing a comprehensive school safety plan described in the report are:

- Establish school-community partnerships
- Identify and measure the problem
- Set measurable goals and objectives
- Identify appropriate research-based programs and strategies
- Implement the comprehensive plan
- Evaluate the plan
- Revise the plan on the basis of the evaluation

The Annual Report on School Safety: 1998 is available online at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS. Copies can be ordered by calling (877) 4ED-PUBS.

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District, told *Northwest Education* that schools have a "long history" of detecting problems such as child abuse and substance abuse. Notifying authorities and bringing in help from outside the school is a "familiar role" for educators. What's different now, she says, is that schools are being asked to identify not only battered children, sexual-abuse victims, and drug users, but also kids with violent proclivities. Richen's office is drafting a protocol to guide teachers and other school staff who see trouble brewing. The guidelines will spell out warning signs and tell teachers when and how to engage other agencies.

Almost everyone agrees that public agencies need to share information on kids who show signs of lashing out. The trick is to trade information without infringing on the student's privacy—a right protected by federal statute. In the wake of the tragic Springfield shooting last spring (see Page 12), Oregon state Representative Bill Morrisette, a former Springfield mayor and retired social studies teacher, has drafted a bill requiring schools to share discipline records with juvenile authorities. Other bills being authored by Morrisette would require teachers to notify their principal about potentially violent students and require at least 24 hours of jail time for students who bring guns to school.

"What we are trying to do," Morrisette told *The Oregonian* newspaper in January, "is get an early indication if there is a problem."

In Bethel, where staff and students are still reeling from Evan Ramsey's 1997 shooting spree in the high school commons, the district is moving toward more teacher-to-teacher networking and interdepartmental agreements to share information as kids move through the system, according to longtime Bethel teacher Terry Jennings.

"We've observed nationally that some kids who are having problems go from school to school to school, and there's no tracking," he says. "There's no consistent help for them."

Jennings deplores this lack of linkage among schools, law enforcement, and social services. Typically, people "start putting together the pieces" of a troubled child's background only after a tragedy occurs, he says. In the case of Evan, social service agencies had spotted signs of emotional disturbance "as early as second or third grade," says Pat Martin, a curriculum specialist with the district. Evan (a foster child) was "just pushed through the system," Martin says. "Because of confidentiality rights, teachers aren't told (when) students have these problems. There's no accountability, no responsibility taken."

Partnerships built on shared information between schools and other youth-serving agencies are a cornerstone of school safety, OJJDP stresses in its 1997 report, *Sharing Information: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Participation in Juvenile Justice Programs*. "Educators who see the first warning signs of delinquency or who have critical information about juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system can, by sharing information with justice and other youth-serving agencies, help develop effective intervention strategies," the report notes. For their part, justice agencies should inform schools when young offenders return to class after clashing with the law. "The school can (then) take steps to provide needed support services to help the student succeed," says the report, which offers detailed guidance on how and when educators can divulge information on student behavior.

POLICY FOR PEACE

Effective school-safety programs cast a wide net. They involve the whole school and embrace a range of strategies. A piecemeal approach—just installing a metal detector, say, or adopting an antibullying pro-

A Guide to Safe Schools

Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools (1998) was put out by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice to guide adults in reaching out to troubled kids quickly and effectively. Noting that "effective schools create environments where children and young people truly feel connected," the report covers:

- Characteristics of a safe and responsive school
- Early warning signs
- Getting help for troubled children
- Developing a prevention and response plan
- Responding to crisis

The full text of *Early Warning, Timely Response* is available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html. To order a copy, call 1-800-624-0100.

BULLYPROOF YOUR SCHOOL

[illegible]

No Bullying. [illegible]

Daniel the Dinosaur. [illegible] the Johnson Institute in Minneapolis, 1-800-231-5165.

Quit It: A Teacher's Guide On Teasing and Bullying. This curriculum [illegible] is designed [illegible] grades K-3 children [illegible]

[illegible] the National Education Association [illegible] Wellesley College's Center for Research on Women [illegible]

Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth- and Fifth-Grade Students. [illegible] Lisa Sjostrom and Nan Stein contains 11 sequential lessons [illegible] homework [illegible] students the opportunity to [illegible] the [illegible] between [illegible] and bullying [illegible] the publisher, Wellesley College's Center for Research on Women [illegible] conceptual framework and a common vocabulary that allows them to [illegible] links between teasing and bullying and [illegible] sexual harassment. [illegible] Center for Research on Women [illegible] gram for second-graders—will probably fail to achieve many gains. Effective programs also are community-oriented, pulling in support, expertise, and resources from all segments. Schools can't do it alone.

Good programs start with a clear policy outlining rules of conduct and penalties that are consistently enforced. "Serious and repeated violent infractions carry heavier penalties than less serious or infrequent infractions," the *Annual Report* counsels. "Due process involves more than one staff member listening to all parties, gathering and interpreting evidence, assigning sanctions where appropriate, and ensuring access to an appeal process."

The National School Boards Association (NSBA), in addition to recommending that school boards adopt and enforce policies that "clearly articulate that violence and threats of violence will not be tolerated," recommends that all schools and districts develop safe-schools plans that "address early-warning signs and include sufficient counseling for students." Under such plans, the NSBA says schools should:

- Establish reporting procedures for safety and security concerns
- Take proactive risk-reduction measures, including consistent enforcement of security-related policies
- Institute comprehensive staff training
- Schedule regular assessments by community-based collaborative groups (school security professionals, administrators, local government agencies, parents, and students)
- Conduct periodic emergency preparedness drills

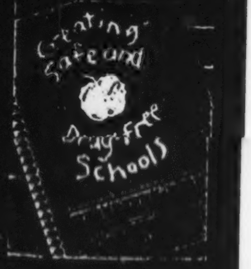
For more guidance on designing safe-schools plans, visit the NSBA Web site at http://www.keepschoolssafe.org/.

Written plans and policies by themselves, clipped into dusty binders on administrators' bookshelves, don't change behavior. Policies must become part of the school culture, communicated clearly and repeatedly to students, parents, and staff. Most importantly, they must be folded in with other strategies for bolstering social skills, brightening school climate, and boosting student achievement.

"Probably the most important component in prevention," says Bethel's school safety coordinator, "is to create and maintain a positive and welcoming school climate."

Indeed, many researchers agree that the best way to make safe schools is to make effective schools—schools that set the bar high and then give every student a sturdy pole for vaulting over.

"A sustained effort to improve teaching and instruction will likely also result in reducing problem student behaviors," the Educational Testing Service notes in its 1998 policy report, *Order In the Classroom*. "Better teaching, better behavior, and higher achievement are intertwined." ■



Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide (1996) is a joint effort by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to spell out concrete steps that schools, parents, students, communities, and businesses can take toward safer learning environments for all children. Also included are information briefs on such topics as weapons searches, drug testing, truancy, uniforms, alternative schools, conflict resolution, and mentoring. The full text of *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide* is available at http://www.ed.gov and at http://www.ncjrs.org/. Copies can be ordered by calling 1-800-624-0100.

CATHY KENNEDY PAPE

TRAGEDY

LESSONS LEARNED IN SPRINGFIELD

BEFORE A CRISIS:

- Coordinate emergency plans

- Educate and train crisis-response team members

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RESPONSE

[illegible]

• Develop a written plan [illegible]

DURING A CRISIS:

• Communicate within the district [illegible]

• Drink water and breathe deeply [illegible]

[illegible]

• Communicate with the media [illegible]

• Support students, staff, and families [illegible]

[illegible]

AFTER A CRISIS:

• Provide follow-up support [illegible]

Cathy Kennedy Paine

[illegible]

EARLY BIRDS

KINDERGARTNERS TAKE THEIR FIRST STEP TO SUCCESS

By CATHERINE PAGLIN

PORTLAND, Oregon—On a November afternoon, a kindergarten teacher intones a fall poem to the class standing before her. Caught by the magical language, the children lift their arms—they waft and sway, leaflike, on a silent, inevitable autumn journey:

Little leaves fall gently down
Red and yellow, orange and brown
Whirling and whirling round and round
Quietly without a sound
Gently without a sound
Falling softly to the ground
Down and down and down.

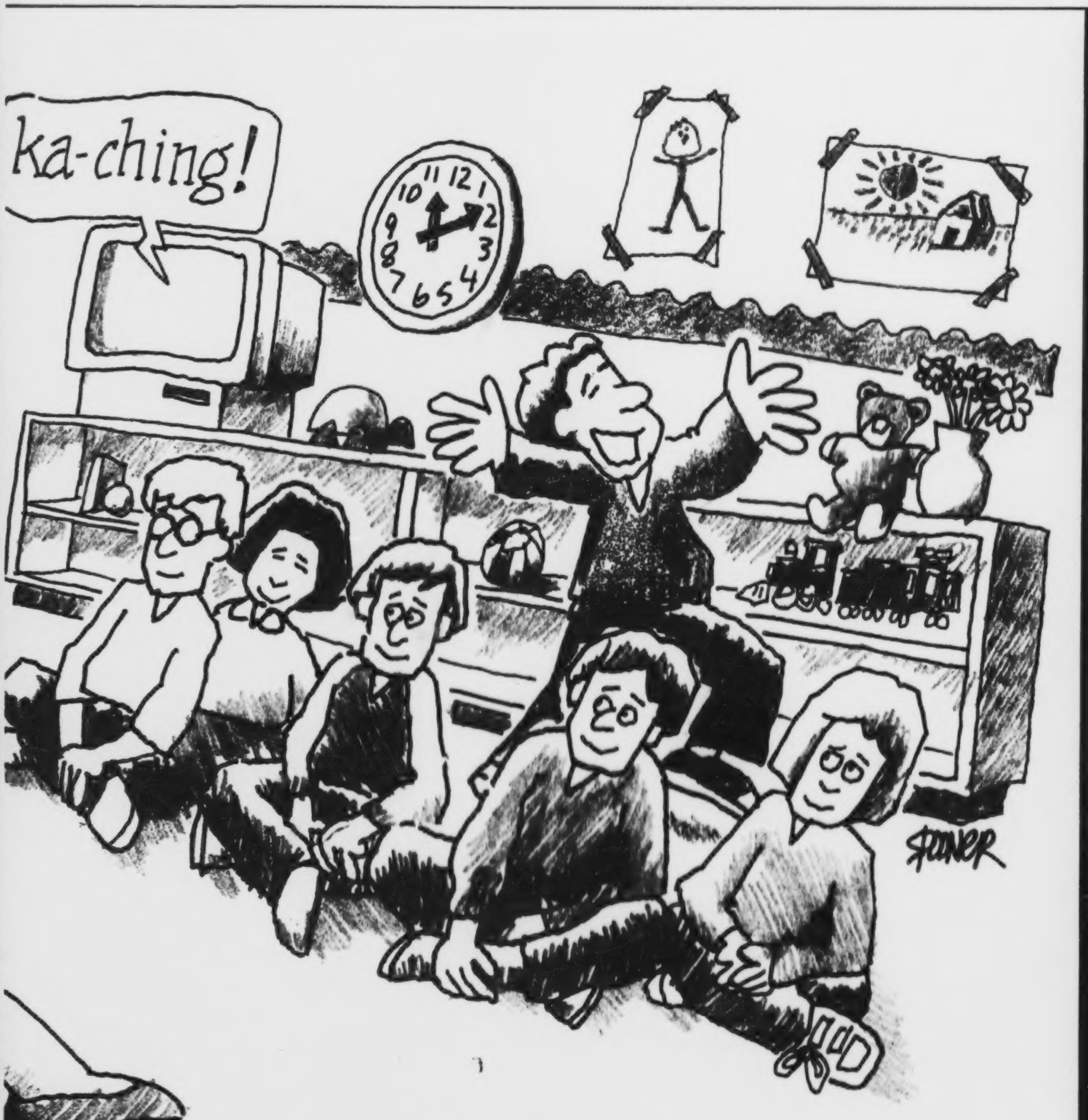
The repetition, the rhythm, the rhyme, and above all, the reverent hush in Susan Scarino's voice, calm a class that only minutes before had been hastily cleaning up after a noisy craft project. "Now quietly as those leaves are falling down," says Scarino, still in hushed tones, "let's go over there and sit by the calendar."

With 27 years of teaching behind her, Scarino knows how to set a mood and smooth the way from one activity to the next. She knows how to hold students' attention, praise their accomplishments and good behavior, and give them ways to resolve conflicts.

But despite her skill, a few of Scarino's little leaves resist coming to rest. While most kindergartners grow to accept school rules and routines, some consistently behave in ways that stand out—ignoring directions, not doing seat work, not paying attention, defying the teacher, making loud noises, not getting along with other children. For these kindergartners, a short-term program—First Step to Success—which draws on parents and classmates for support, can help them make a quick turnaround and, experts believe, avoid more serious antisocial behaviors and academic failure down the road.

"Alicia just spent the first week or two of school pretty much screaming, just not able to sit still, and upset and yelling out all the time, and not waiting her turn, constantly wanting my attention. And all she could do was scribble on paper," says Scarino, describing a girl just beginning the First Step program. "She wasn't able to focus on me, on the class, on what we were doing."

Some teachers with students like Alicia think they don't have time to implement a new program in the classroom. Not so, say First Step developers and consultants, because a teacher with a disruptive or aggressive student is already spending a disproportionate amount of time on that child. A teacher using First Step is still working


ka-ching!
SPOONER

MOM-AND-POP

First Step to Success is brought to bear at the outset of a child's school career when changes in antisocial and aggressive behavior are easiest to make and parents are most optimistic. But programs for parents of older children can also help promote positive behaviors and maintain a peaceful school atmosphere. Three such programs are profiled below.

"Usually, what you find in school-based services is programs for the kids," says Kate Kavanagh, director of Project Alliance, a large-scale effort to engage parents in promoting social and academic success for their middle school children. "They're a captive audience, and it's harder to get the parents involved."

Taking place at three Portland middle schools, the five-year, federally funded study is being conducted by the Oregon Social Learning Center, a Eugene-based nonprofit research center that devised the home component of First Step. The center specializes in the study of family, peer, and school factors that influence behavior.

To get parents involved, Project Alliance offers students and their families several levels of intervention, depending on need and interest. At each school, half of all sixth-graders and their families (the other half are in a control group) receive brochures on topics related to family management, relationships, and peer issues; in-class instruction and related family homework on topics such as study skills, healthy behaviors, dealing with strong feelings, problem solving, and how to stick with positive goals; and invitations to evening discussions on topics such as avoiding drugs, setting limits, and avoiding gang involvement.

At the second level of intervention, families are offered a family check-up—an assessment using interviews, questionnaires, and videotaped family discussions. They can then obtain feedback on the family and child's degree of protection and risk in areas such as academics, peer relations, and parenting skills.

At the third level, families are offered a menu of services, including parent groups, brief consultations, help in monitoring school performance, and help in drawing up an eighth-grade plan with specific academic and behavioral goals.

Project Alliance shares pooled study information with parents in order to help create family norms around issues such as appropriate curfews, staying drug-free, and study routines. The project also tries to bring families together to strengthen each other's efforts to support academic achievement and positive social behaviors. "The strongest protection for kids is if parents know each other and work together," says Kavanagh.

Students in the study will be followed into high school to find out if the services made a difference in their lives.

When Whiteaker Middle School in Keizer, Oregon, was reconfigured in 1994 to include sixth-graders, it became one of the biggest middle schools in the state, with 1,250 students. Parents of sixth-graders were worried about safety, about bullies, about 11- and 12-year-olds being stuffed in lockers and trash cans. Out of these concerns came a grassroots solution—the Mom Squad, a group that patrolled hallways during lunchtime.

The effort was fairly informal until the 1998 school year when parent Ruth Hegle, seeing the initial group of parents move on as their children graduated.

decided to appoint herself as Mom Squad Coordinator. "I knew it was too valuable to let it die when we lost our core people last spring," she says. With the support of Principal Irene Fernandez, Hegle held a training in August and was at school every day for the first month to make sure things went smoothly.

About 25 parents turned up for the school tours and training that took them through various scenarios and established guidelines concerning acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Hegle also emphasized the importance of finding out students' names when dealing with a problem, and cautioned parents not to join kids in criticizing school staff.

The Mom Squad, usually four moms on a crew, supervises four lunch periods over the course of three hours. They're in the lunchroom, an outdoor courtyard, the gym, and two hallways. "We very seldom have fights because the kids really don't know when there's a mom around the corner," says Hegle.

But, the moms see themselves as more than enforcers of discipline. They develop a rapport with the students. "We do a lot of correcting, but we do a lot of connecting," says Hegle. If a mom has a negative encounter, next time she's at school she seeks out that student in order to have a good encounter. Some students call the squad members "Mom." Some routinely hang out close by because the presence of adults makes them feel safe.

The moms on the Mom Squad participate because they like kids and care about the school, not just because of concern about their own children's safety, Hegle says. "They're there to serve the kids. It can be stressful but it's very rewarding."

Linda and Anthony Wallace were unhappy when their son began attending Arlington High School in Indianapolis. As alumni, they were shocked by the deterioration of their formerly beautiful school. They saw trash in the halls, graffiti on the walls, kids climbing in and out of windows, and kids throwing things at football games. They also found an administration that didn't welcome parent help.

Then a new principal, Jacqueline Greenwood, reached out to students and parents, inspiring trust and dedication. "Dr. Greenwood said, 'Parents, we really need your help,'" says Linda Wallace.

Linda had noticed that students' behavior improved when her husband was present. At games and talent shows, she overheard comments like, "Hey man, that's Tony's father. Don't curse like that."

"I saw what an impact a father figure would have," says Linda. "I'm about the strongest black woman, but I don't care how strong I am, I can't be my husband. You have to have that male there for the kids that are missing that at home."

From this insight, and Greenwood's support, came Security Dads. Beginning with 10 fathers nine years ago, the program has grown to more than 50 men walking the halls, cafeteria, and library; going to games, dances, and concerts; acting as peacekeepers and role models.

"It's gone beyond security," says Greenwood. "It's in the classrooms, it's tutoring, it's big brothers."

Now, the building feels safe at any time of day and students show respect for their school and trust in adults. "They walk up to the dads and tell them anything. They report guns and drugs," says Wallace.

hard, but he or she will go home at night feeling good, instead of discouraged, says Dr. Annemieke Golly, First Step coordinator and teacher trainer at the University of Oregon's Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior.

After two and a half months of school Alicia's behavior has improved greatly, but she still stands out. She often yells, ignores or forgets directions, and leaves activities or the room when she feels like it. She makes big demands on Scarino's attention. "She still hasn't gotten used to the fact that she's one person out of 20, and she needs constant reinforcement that she's OK and that she's doing well and that she's on task," the teacher says.

Unable to give Alicia as much one-on-one attention as she needs and faced with continuing disruption that is hard on the other children, Scarino selected Alicia and her guardians, with their agreement, to participate in First Step. Offered at two Portland schools through a federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant, the program is administered through the district's prevention office. The program was developed in Eugene, Oregon, during the early- to mid-1990s under a U.S. Department of Education grant as a collaborative effort between the Eugene School District and several Eugene-based organizations—the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, the Oregon Social Learning Center, and the Oregon Research Institute.

Before Alicia's first day in the program, a First Step consultant lays the groundwork: She observes Alicia in the classroom several times, she role plays the program with her out in the hall, and she explains it to Alicia's guardians and classmates.

If the child is having behavior problems at school, there's a good chance similar problems happen at home, notes Christina Newton, First Step consultant with Portland Public Schools. Most parents are eager to have their child participate. "They usually go nuts," she says. "Their kid gets that one-on-one attention, special attention. They love the idea."

Parent Julie Patterson, whose son, Jacob, went through the program last year, admits that initially she felt embarrassed about her son's behavior. But the first meeting with Newton took that feeling away. "There weren't any secrets about it at all," Patterson says. "It was just all out in the open, and plain and simple."

Plain and simple also describes how First Step works in the classroom. For the first five days, the consultant does the intervention. On Alicia's first day, Newton works with her for 20 minutes. On a string around her neck, Newton wears a card that is green on one side, red on the other. She sits near the teacher where Alicia can always see her. When Alicia does well—sits where Scarino asks her to, listens and participates during a calendar lesson, and stays in line with her hands to herself during a fire drill—Newton displays the green side; when Alicia's attention wanders from the calendar lesson, Newton flips the card to the red side.

This visual system cuts out contentiousness. "It's informational. There's no arguing, there's no debate—'He did it, I didn't do it, he made me,'" says Elka Turner, a teacher who is using First Step at Chapman Elementary School, across town from Clinton Kelly Elementary, where Scarino teaches.

Along with the visual cue cards, there's an auditory prompt to remind the teacher to check the child's behavior. When the prompt—a sound from a computer—goes off, the teacher notes what the child is doing and keeps a tally, making a hatch mark on either the red or green side of the card. On the first day, because the child needs to experience success, Newton is prompted to mark the card approximately every 30 seconds. At the end of the 20 minutes, Alicia earns 39 out of 40 points, seven more than she needs to earn a reward of her choice for the entire class. Offered options such as stickers, treats, extra play time, or a special activity, Alicia chooses to hand out Tootsie Rolls, for which her classmates thank her.

Motivated in part by the rewards, the child's classmates are drawn in. "Whenever *'ka-ching'* [the sound of the computer prompt] goes off, you check on him," explains a boy whose classmate is in the program. "If he's doing good, the teacher writes that he's doing good. When she doesn't hear it, someone tells her. We have to help her."

Children are told they can help the First Step child earn points by attending to their own work, playing well with others, and praising and thanking the child for good behavior while ignoring other behavior.

The child's parents are also involved in the classroom portion of the program. After Alicia's first day, Newton calls home with a reminder to Alicia's guardian to look at the red-green card, sign it, return it to Alicia's backpack, praise Alicia, and reward her with some special one-on-one time together, such as reading a story or going for a walk. This activity is to be recorded on the card, just as the teacher records the child's choice of a school reward.

"We want the child to know that the parent likes it that they're following directions at school," says Golly. Sending the card back and forth ensures that the teacher feels supported by the parents and the parents feel supported by the school, she says. "This is truly a collaborative effort." (See the sidebar on Page 16 for more programs that involve parents in maintaining peaceful schools and classrooms.)

If the child fails to earn enough points for a reward, the card still goes home. In this case, says Newton, "Mom can see he didn't earn his points. She thanks the child for bringing it home, signs it, has him put it in his backpack, and that's the end of it. You don't say another word about it. You don't dwell on it. His consequence was he didn't get a reward for the class and he didn't have special time with Mom and Dad."

"He knew why he got red," says Christine Willard, whose son Michael went through First Step last year. "He wasn't punished or anything, but he learned from it."

Through the red-green card system, all the important people in a child's life—parents, teacher, peers—consistently give him more attention for appropriate classroom behaviors and less attention for antisocial behaviors. Golly boils it down to a simple principle: "You give the child a lot of attention for the things you want to see happen."

After five days, the teacher takes over the consultant's role, wearing the cards, listening for the computer cue, and tallying points for behavior. As the child improves, the daily intervention period lengthens and the prompts and rewards become less frequent.

KEEPING YOUR COOL

After a child has participated in First Step for 10 days, the consultant holds the first of six once-a-week meetings with the parents and child to go over the at-home program. "It's been my experience that kids who have behavior problems in more than one setting won't get better if you treat them in just one setting," says Kate Kavanagh, research associate and family therapist with the Eugene-based Oregon Social Learning Center, and author of HomeBase, the parent component of First Step.

Extending the program into the home gives the child more chances to practice the desired behaviors and helps parents support the classroom changes.

"Our model has always been to teach the parents to teach the children," says Kavanagh.

HomeBase focuses on six parent and child skills that are important for successful adjustment to school: sharing about school (communication), cooperation, setting (and accepting) limits, solving problems, making friends, and building confidence. For each skill there are recipelike cards with activities for the parent and child to do together for five to 10 minutes a night.

Willard's son Michael still likes an activity called "Find a Treasure" in which he hides an object and then gives his mother clues, one at a time, about where it is hidden. This is one of the activities that gives the child practice in communicating. Building better communication skills will eventually open up parent-child discussions about school. Such talks not only alert a parent to any problems, but allow her to enjoy the child's successes.

HomeBase also gave Willard tips on effective ways to elicit information from her son. "I ask more questions and more specific questions," she says. Where she used to ask, "How was school today?" now she asks questions like "What did you do in math?" and "Did you learn any new words?" She and her son continue to do a First Step activity once a week.

Jacob Patterson still has his recipe-card holder with his activity cards in it. He doesn't let his two older sisters touch it. "Once in a while he'll say, 'Mom, can we do one of those activities?'" says Julie Patterson.

"I think he uses it if he's feeling left out or lonely, which is good," says her husband, Mike.

"It's not so much parent training," says Golly, "but structure for parents to interact positively with their kids. Now they have a way that makes the child understand that the parent thinks school's important, and everyone has the same expectations." And, she notes, parents are happy to hear it's OK to have rules and limits.

Mike Patterson was particularly pleased with First Step's home component, which he felt gave him creative ways to deal with previously frustrating situations instead of yelling and getting upset. "The way I was raised you did it and that was that or you paid the price," he says. "I don't want to be that way. If you can get through to them without losing your own cool, for me in my life that's a major accomplishment." He says he was surprised to discover that he got as much out of the program as Jake did.

"Two things First Step taught me," says Julie Patterson. "One is to focus more on the positive, and just kind of let the negative go, which is hard for me. And the second thing is how important it is to spend time with each child, one-on-one."

FROM CLINGY TO CONFIDENT

A study of 46 of the worst-behaved kindergartners in the Eugene School District, now fourth- and fifth-graders, found that after the First Step program, 50 percent became indistinguishable from peers in their behavior. Of the other 50 percent, half needed more behavior-management intervention (such as behavior cards with happy and sad faces, extra verbal praise, and point cards on the teacher's desk) to keep on track, and half needed a more intrusive intervention such as medication or a special-education placement.

First Step can be used with antisocial children who are socially withdrawn as well as those who act out. Though they may sit quietly, socially withdrawn children often don't pay attention to the teacher, don't do their work, and don't interact with their peers. Just as with acting-out children, they are rewarded in the First Step program for following directions, doing their work, and getting along with classmates.

Results from First Step can be fast and dramatic. Before First Step, Jacob's parents were so baffled and frustrated by his behavior they had been considering home schooling. "We couldn't even get him to go to class. He was scared to death to

See EARLY BIRDS, Page 55

EMOTIONAL LESSONS

Out on the Tundra, Kids Learn to Better Understand Their Own and Others' Feelings

By LEE SHERMAN

BETHEL, **Alaska**—Teacher Terry Jennings stands before a cluster of cross-legged kindergartners at the K-2 school Mikelnguut Elitnaurviat—"Little Children's School" in Yup'ik, the lyrical language of the Eskimo people native to this remote corner of southwest Alaska. Most folks just call the school M.E.

"What does a good listener look like?" Jennings asks the fidgety kids, then pauses. "Joseph?"

"They're not doing bad stuff," Joseph volunteers.

"Misty?"

"Keep your hands to yourself," she offers.

"Fanny?"

"Not pinch."

Jennings points to a poster headed "Good Listening Rules." One by one, he reviews the rules: Raise hands. Keep hands and feet to yourself. Listen when someone is talking. ("We listen with our eyes and with our ears," Jennings reminds the small students, pointing first to his eyes, then to his ears.) And sit how?

"Crisscross applesauce!" the children chime.

Next he holds up a black-and-white photo of a little girl talking to a little boy. "Theresa is telling her cousin Raphael about a bad dream she had," Jennings explains to the students. "How does a bad dream make you feel?"

"Scared," says Misty.

"Mad," says Joseph.

"Sad," says Catherine.

Asks Jennings: "If something makes you feel mad or sad or scared, what could you do about it?"

Answers pop up around the room: Open your eyes. Wake up and turn on the night light. Walk away.

"Could you go talk to somebody about your dream?" Jennings prompts.

"I had a dream last night about some bad guys!" one boy offers.

Jennings once again draws their attention to the photo. "Raphael is definitely listening to Theresa," he says. "How do we know?"

Catherine raises her hand. "He's looking at her," she says.

Jennings nods. "He's not looking at an airplane or fiddling with something," he notes. The teacher then acts out a pantomime of a good listener, nodding thoughtfully, then putting his hand under his chin as though hanging on a speaker's every word. "I could also ask questions, like, 'What happened in your bad dream?'" Jennings coaches.

"Sometimes," the teacher continues, "when you get angry or scared or sad, you blow up like a big balloon full of angry or scared or sad. When you talk to someone, it's like letting the air out of the balloon."

To wrap up the 20-minute lesson, Jennings switches on a boom box. With lots of energetic wiggling, the kids clap and sing along with the recording:

"I feel proud when I build a big tower;
I feel mad when it gets knocked down.
I feel happy when I eat an ice cream cone;
I feel sad when it plops to the ground.
Whatever I feel, I'll tell you about it.
I might want to shout it.
Or whisper in your ear.
Whatever I feel, I'll tell you about it.
I'll tell you just how I feel, I feel.
I'll tell you just how I feel."

Bullets and blood seem light-years from this peaceful scene at M.E. Yet this gentle lesson is the direct offspring of the terrible morning in 1997 when Bethel Regional High School lost two loved ones to a student's gunfire. Hoping to equip kids with better coping skills and problem-solving strategies, the school district adopted a curriculum that starts in the earliest years teaching children to recognize and understand feelings, to make positive and effective choices, and to keep anger from

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spinning out of control. The curriculum they chose is Second Step. Developed by the Seattle nonprofit group Committee for Children, Second Step was one of only 10 programs nationwide that rated an A in a recent report on antiviolence curricula (see the sidebar on Page 26 for a complete list of top-rated curricula). Besides praising the curriculum's "beautiful, high-quality materials," the report, *Safe Schools, Safe Students* by the nonprofit policy research group Drug Strategies, stressed the "rigorous ongoing evaluation (that) shows significant reductions in physical aggression in the classroom, as well as increased prosocial behavior."

At M.E., where every staff person—from kindergarten teacher Jennings to the cook, the custodian, and the secretary—has been trained in the curriculum, children hear the same message from one end of

angnirluni

PHOTOS BY DEAN SWOPE

When my mother helped me put my mukluks on, she would advise me, "Try to be good today. If others bother you, don't fight back. If you don't follow my advice and fight back, they will fight with you and make you cry."

—Lucy Beaver of Bethel from *Yupik Lore: Oral Traditions of an Eskimo People*, Lower Kuskokwim School District

campus to the other, says Principal Larry Ctibor. "Second Step gets everybody on the same track," he says. "Before, we had a school discipline plan and classroom rules, but different people were using a lot of different terminology to deal with problems. Now, no matter where they are at school—on the playground, in the lunchroom, library, PE, or walking down the hall—they'll hear the same phrases and vocabulary from everybody they encounter. When you follow that through, year after year, that's a powerful tool for working with kids."

Second Step was built on research showing that violent criminals and juvenile offenders typically lack three basic skills needed for living peacefully in society:

EMPATHY. Portraying empathy as the cornerstone of violence prevention, the Second Step teacher's guide explains that "because empathic people tend to understand other points of view, they are less likely to misunderstand and become angry about others' behaviors."

IMPULSE CONTROL. The curriculum uses two proven strategies for teaching kids to act less impulsively and aggressively: problem solving, which teaches children to use reason in social situations; and behavioral skills training, which teaches "target behaviors," such as apologizing or joining in, that can be used in many situations.

ANGER MANAGEMENT. Elementary- and middle-school kids learn to recognize anger cues and triggers; calm themselves down before anger takes hold; and think over the incident afterward. Younger children learn to calm themselves with deep breathing, counting, and coaching themselves with statements like "calm down."

Overly aggressive and impulsive kids sap teachers' energy and rob classmates of learning time. Their peers often deride and reject them. Antisocial behavior—such as poking and pushing, rushing into things, behaving defiantly, interrupting others, and blurting out irrelevant thoughts—starts to show up as early as age three, according to the Second Step teacher's guide.

"What is in store down the road for these high-risk children if their impulsive and aggressive behavior remains unchecked? Research shows that many are headed for a lifetime of failure, exacting a great toll from society," the guide states.

Early and effective intervention can prevent the failure, abuse, and crime that can darken these children's futures—and harm those around them. By beginning with preschoolers, Second Step aims to steer kids early toward peaceful problem solving. The social skills children build when they're young may well stop them from lashing out later in life, the curriculum's creators argue.

Ledger-sized posters are the main props in the preschool and elementary units of the Second Step curriculum. The once-a-week lessons each center on a different poster-sized photograph. Some depict children showing emotion. Others suggest a story. The photo that Jennings showed his kindergartners—"Theresa" telling "Raphael" about her bad dream—is an example.

On the back of each poster, the lesson is laid out clearly for the teacher. The units are built around the three broad skill areas of empathy, impulse control, and anger management. Within those broad areas, each lesson targets a specific strategy or concept (example: active listening); presents a set of objectives (students will be able to demonstrate physical and verbal skills of active listening); provides questions for discussion ("Do you think Raphael is listening to Theresa? How can you tell?"); gives guidance for role plays (pairs of students demonstrate active listening); and offers suggestions for reinforcing the lesson throughout the week (calling attention to students who show good listening skills).

Song tapes, like the one about sharing feelings Jennings played for his kindergartners, and a couple of loveable puppets—Impulsive Puppy and Slow-Down Snail—supplement the posters for the littlest kids. In middle school, the highest level of the curriculum, lessons revolve around videos and scripted role plays. (Bethel Regional High School has adopted a curriculum called Get Real About Violence, published by CHEF in Seattle, and another called the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) from the RCCP National Center in New York City.)

Teacher Kathy Baldwin is a convert. Skeptical at first about using Second Step with her first-graders, ("I wasn't sure how they would relate to the pictures"), she was "amazed" at their eager response. "They were real interested, and they always had something to say about what was happening in their own lives," she recalls. When the posters portrayed anger, some children, particularly those who had older brothers or sisters, would relate the photo to the high school shooting spree of 11th-grader Evan Ramsey. Says Baldwin: "The kids would bring it up themselves. (They'd say), 'Oh, you mean getting mad like Evan did.'"

A SHATTERED PEACE

Residents refer to the incident simply as The Shooting. Two years later, talking about it still comes hard for many. Throats tighten up. Words fail. Eyes trail off into some unfocused distance. Late at night, as sled dogs yip and whine under an arctic moon, some who were at the scene that day lie awake, remembering the hot smell of gunpowder, the *plink-plink-plink* of shotgun pellets, the gallop of panicked students, the troopers storming the building, the boy being slammed to the floor on his face, the handcuffs, the blood. Others remember no details, only a blur of fear and confusion that left them numb.

It was a cold February morning. Students were just getting to school, shedding coats, gloves, and snow boots—necessities on the frozen tundra. The plinking of the shotgun seemed unreal, impossible, like a segment ripped from a movie script or a story torn from somebody else's front page. It was the kind of thing that was connected to other places: big cities, impersonal places, places you watch on the six o'clock news. It was never supposed to happen here, in this small town where everybody knew everybody else—or thought they did.

Two people died that day: Ron Edwards, Principal of Bethel Region-

al High School, and sophomore Josh Palacios, a popular basketball player. Two other students were wounded. The event was made more terrible by a tragic irony: The shooter was the longtime foster son of the district superintendent.

Afterward, at packed community meetings, the outraged question, How could this happen? soon evolved into a problem-solving question, How can we stop this from happening again? The first ideas that surfaced were physical measures—metal detectors, campus cops, locked-down buildings. But, as district Safety Coordinator Kent Harding points out, "You can impose security systems to where it becomes more of a penal institution than a public school."

Besides, such solutions, had they been in place, wouldn't have altered the seeds of the deed—the troubled life of 16-year-old Evan, son of a convicted felon and an alcoholic mother. Described by *Boston Globe* reporter Steve Fainaru as an obsessive player of violent video games who was "frequently picked on by stronger, more popular boys," and who "struggled to control an explosive temper," Evan (say ee-VAN) was not unlike countless kids whose inner battles go unnoticed in a revved-up, disordered world. In Bethel, as in communities everywhere, troubles rooted off-campus in chaotic homes and fragmented families inevitably invade schoolhouses.

"By far the most serious concern of many parents and teachers is that the issues that led to the shootings extend far beyond the walls of Bethel Regional High," Fainaru wrote in a three-part series on the Bethel killings titled "Alaska School Murders: A Window on Teen Rage" (October 18-20, 1998). Jacqueline Volkmann, a social worker at the high school the year of the shooting, told Fainaru: "There's so many kids out there who believe they are nobodies, nothing. Kids that feel alone, rejected, abandoned. So many kids nobody pays attention to."

Some of these cast-off kids show outward signs of potential violence. Former teacher Pat Martin recalls that while the mayhem raged in the hallways that day, students huddling behind classroom doors were asking, Who's the shooter? Seven or eight names came up—names of confused youths who seemed angry enough to blast away classmates and staff.

But no one saw Evan's explosion coming. "The whole time Evan was ramming through the school shooting his gun off, his name was never mentioned," says Martin, who was a close friend of the slain principal. "The scary part," she adds, "is that most of those seven or eight kids—kids the other students feel have the same capability (for violence as Evan)—are still there."

As if to prove Martin's point, while Evan sat in prison awaiting trial the following year, other boys' threats to bring guns to school kept Bethel High students confined to their classrooms on two occasions. And that winter in Quinahagak, one of 22 Eskimo villages served by the Lower Kuskokwim School District, a 13-year-old shot his mother to death in her bed and then tried to kill his father. Rocked once again, the district was all the more stunned because the boy's mother was a longtime school secretary.

Troubled kids are not in short supply in Bethel, the hub for dozens of roadless villages scattered across the delta where the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers empty into the Bering Sea. Villagers, most of Yup'ik Eskimo ancestry, travel by small planes, aluminum skiffs, and snow machines to Bethel for jobs, social services, medical care, business dealings, and (especially when the annual state dividends arrive) for parties. Though alcohol is not for sale in Bethel and is illegal in the villages, it seeps in. The toll on many families is steep.

Such troubles show up in classrooms in the form of behavior problems ranging from spitwads to suicide. The shooting is the extreme end of a spectrum of disruption that plays out every day in district schools. Last year at Bethel's Kilbuck Elementary School, the incendiary message "KKK" was carved in big letters on the side of the building, and obscene words were scrawled on bathroom stalls, according to Principal Phyllis Williams. Bullying and harassment—the same kind of razzing and hassling that Evan reportedly suffered at school—are commonplace, she says. Threats and name-calling, what Williams sums up as "the inability to be tolerant and accepting," interfere with learning, and poison relationships among students.

These issues were nothing new in Bethel. But it was the high school shooting that focused the community's attention. Townspeople, teachers, and district personnel began to ask, Did Evan lack certain social skills that might have steered him from his murderous course? Can we teach those skills to the children who remain in our care? Is there a curriculum that could help kids—all kids—better vent their frustrations, understand their feelings, and get along with others? Can we use the shooting as a catalyst for change in our community?

WOW, THAT LOOKS LIKE ME!

All but two of the first-graders in Abby Augustine's classroom in the Bethel Immersion School have the raven-black hair and deep-brown eyes of their Yup'ik ancestors, who for thousands of years have drawn sustenance from the marshes, ocean, and endless tundra of the Yukon and Kuskokwim deltas. Before Western culture, technology (including TV), and alcohol began eroding ancient practices, Yup'ik life centered around hunting, fishing, and gathering. Respect for nature and for animals was a core value. So was respect for others, especially elders. Sharing, helping, and cooperating—themes that pop up often in the Second Step curriculum—are among other values listed on a "Yup'ik Values" poster created by the district's art staff for classroom display.

Rekindling respect for native values—lost to many families in recent years—is a district goal. To that end, the district screens texts for compatibility with Yup'ik beliefs. It publishes storybooks and primers based on such traditional Yup'ik practices as gathering wild eggs, picking berries, and smoking fish. These books, along with richly illustrated legends such as "How the Crane Got Its Blue Eyes," are printed in both English and Yup'ik for use in bilingual and immersion classrooms. Bilingual specialists also are writing thematic units, based on Yup'ik practices and knowledge, that meet state standards in science, math, social studies, and language arts.

In the spirit of honoring local culture, the Second Step curriculum is being modified (with permission from the curriculum's publisher) to fit the community. If children are to internalize the messages in the posters, they need to identify with the pictures, district curriculum specialists say. So they commissioned a photographer to capture images of local children modeling emotions and acting out scenarios such as playground disputes or bus-stop squabbles. These Yup'ik faces will replace the photos on 35 Second Step posters.

"It's very important for kids to see kids who look like them," says Nita Rearden, a specialist in bilingual programs for the district. "If they do, they can apply their own little feelings to that picture. It opens them up to talk about something that might be inside them."

Sophie Shield learned to read in the delta village of Tuntutuliak with the standard 1950s primer. Nothing in those pages reflected village life. The need for culturally

If some among you try to do you harm, do not retaliate, but avoid confrontation, rather show compassion as you go through life

—From *One Must Arrive with a Story to Tell: Traditional Narratives by the Elders of Tununak, Alaska*

Lower Kuskokwim School District

TOP 10 CURRICULA

[illegible]

appropriate materials is very real to her. "I grew up with Dick, Jane, and Sally," says Shield, who works closely with Rearden to translate and adapt materials. "It was all foreign to me. They were aliens to us. It was far away. For the local kids, how nice it would be for them to look at the pictures and say, 'Wow, that looks like me!' Instead of frilly dresses, they (would see) mukluks and parkas. How nice it would be!"

One November morning as snow falls steadily outside, Augustine's immersion students—many of them clad in snowsuits and boots—wrestle with a lesson in listening skills. The message is the same one Jennings delivered to his kindergartners moments earlier in the building next door. But this time, it's in Yup'ik: *Qaneryukuvet yaggluten* (If you want to speak, raise your hand). *Unateten it'gaten-llu ilavnun agtuuteksaunaki* (Keep your hands and feet to yourself). *Ilaput qanqan niicugniaqluta* (When someone is talking, we listen to them).

Augustine then segues to a Second Step lesson in empathy. Speaking in Yup'ik, she tells the first-graders to pretend they're detectives, looking for clues about how other kids are feeling. She holds up a picture of a little girl with a big grin. How is she feeling? the teacher asks the class. Happy, several students say. What clues tell us she's happy? the teacher asks. Mouth turned up, eyes wrinkled, teeth showing. Augustine writes *angniq* ("happy") on the board, and then calls Karis to the front of the room and asks her to imitate the emotion shown in the photo. Karis smiles broadly. What things make you happy? the teacher asks the students. One girl says she's happy when she has a birthday. Another says she's happy when she goes sledding.

Moving on with the lesson, Augustine shows first a photo of a boy looking sad (clues: mouth in a frown, chin wrinkled, eyes downcast) and a girl looking mad (clues: arms crossed, eyebrows knit, forehead wrinkled). In pairs, the children stand up and role play events that stir up different emotions. In one role play, a girl gives a sucker to a boy, who smiles and looks happy. In another role play, a boy hands a piece of paper to a girl, who abruptly tears it in half. This sets off an excited buzz among the watching children. They mimic the ripping motion, and chatter among themselves about the girl's aggressive action. At lesson's end, the children use crayons to color in faces showing anger, fear, happiness, and sadness. With glue, they tack down bits of yarn for hair.

Role playing, central to the Second Step curriculum, isn't a perfect fit with Yup'ik culture. Native children often are uncomfortable standing up and speaking out in class.

"It stems back to our ancestors, when only the elders spoke," says Shield. "In the old days, we as little kids were taught to listen to the elders all the time."

Teachers in Bethel and the villages beyond need to be sensitive, Shield says, to this deeply rooted discomfort. She suggests that teachers call for volunteers instead of demanding that students engage in role play.

Overcoming discomfort with role playing is the biggest challenge facing the district as it works to train teachers across the delta in using Second Step, says curriculum specialist Nancy Brown, who's leading the training effort. Eventually, she says, the district plans to translate the materials into Yup'ik. The curriculum will be presented to parents in coming months, in hopes that families will adopt—and thereby reinforce—the tools and words kids are learning in school. The district must skillfully blend "home language" with "school language" to reach parents in their comfort zone, Brown says. Parents need to understand that "trying to take over the role of parents" is not the district's goal, she says.

Sometimes, culture clashes show up in unexpected places. The family kit that accompanies the curriculum (***Family Guide to Second Step: Parenting Strategies for a Safer Tomorrow***) comes with refrigerator magnets—those ubiquitous trinkets of middle-class kitchens. But out on this windswept river delta, which feels like a deep-freeze much of the year, "not all villagers *have* fridges," Brown notes.

Cultural mismatches aside, Rearden believes that Second Step shows great promise for bringing change to this distant corner of Alaska.

"It's for every person," she says, "because we all have the same feelings." ■

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SCHOOL REVOLUTION

A NEW CULTURE OF COURTESY AND COOPERATION TAKES HOLD IN EUGENE

By MELISSA STEINEGER

EUGENE, Oregon—Into the Kennedy Middle School cafeteria, 100 seventh- and eighth-graders quietly file, find seats, and settle down. School counselor Sharon Tabor stands, smiling, before the group. She holds up a hand. Within 10 seconds, all noise ceases. Youngsters sit attentively.

Tabor briefly introduces the performance, a soap opera parody. As a dozen peers put on the skit, the audience watches—no wiggling, giggling, or elbowing. Just once does a teacher appear within the youngsters' field of vision. He taps his finger to his lips while looking meaningfully at one student, who blushes and sits quietly for the remainder of the presentation.

All this attentiveness and courtesy occurs just two weeks before winter break. On a Friday. Sound like a fairy tale?

At Kennedy Middle School, it's the new reality. Highlighted as a model school in the U.S. Education and Justice departments' first annual report on school safety, Kennedy has seen discipline referrals to the school office plunge from 100 a month to 30.

Kennedy, along with a dozen other schools in the Eugene area, is participating in the Peaceable Educational Practices (PEP) project. Developed at the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior at the University of Oregon's School of Education, PEP draws upon current research to identify best practices for reducing school violence and then spreads the word. Currently, PEP is collaborating with the education service districts and schools in western Oregon from Eugene to Roseburg.

PEP has organized the research on reducing school violence into three simple strategies:

1. COLLECT DATA. PEP helps schools create a profile of discipline patterns to better target their efforts. While schools may know the disciplinary record of individual students, usually they don't have the big picture—what type of referral behavior is most common schoolwide? Where and when does such behavior most often happen? Nor do schools typically know how effective current discipline methods are. With a PEP data profile, a school may see that a majority of referrals stem from, say, afternoon playground fights. The school can then provide lessons in appropriate playground behavior and step up the adult presence at afternoon recess.

2. ESTABLISH SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAMS. Typically using a research-based curriculum, schools teach students:

- Consequences of participating in violent behavior
- Conflict resolution and anger-management skills
- Personal responsibility and empathy

3. DEVELOP ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TAILORED TO A SCHOOL'S SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. These strategies—which PEP calls Effective Behavior Support (EBS) systems—can range from schoolwide rules to individual interventions. The EBS team, a group of teachers who work with the PEP program coordinator, finds and tailors solutions for specific problem areas at their school. In the example above, the EBS team might have decided on appropriate interventions to address the playground problems. The EBS team also determines three to five schoolwide rules that every teacher teaches and every student must follow at all times.

From these simple steps, in just three years has come a profound change—a revolution, even—at Kennedy Middle School. The transformation actually began before PEP was offered in the district.

"It was my first year at Kennedy," Principal Kay Mehas recalls of 1995-96. "The sixth-grade teaching team came to me very concerned about the sixth-graders. They felt there were a high number of negative leaders, that the situation already was critical, and that—since such behavior typically worsens from sixth to eighth grade—if the behavior was not addressed, by eighth grade we would have an extremely serious problem."

At a staff meeting, teachers began developing a strategy. The first step was to assign a mentor to each of 30 problematic sixth-graders. Teachers then tapped Mehas and Tabor, also new to Kennedy that year, to find a schoolwide curriculum that would help.

While some adults see middle school students as too old for effective intervention—the attitude that if a student isn't reached by third grade, it's too late—Mehas believes middle school presents a wonderful opportunity to turn youngsters around. The middle years are an exhilarating period in the lives of children, she says—a time when kids start thinking for themselves. This critical stage in emotional and behavioral development is almost as important, Mehas says, as the first three years of life. And while parents are the biggest influence in a child's first three years, Mehas says, school—teachers, peers, and climate—can have an enormous influence when youths begin thinking independently.

"A school culture," says Mehas, "influences how they'll see the world."

Mehas, with an extensive background in education at all levels, and Tabor, also well-versed in elementary and middle school education, began investigating violence-prevention curricula.

They chose Second Step, developed by the Seattle nonprofit group Committee for Children, for its strong focus on empathy. (See the article on Page 20 for more on Second Step.)

"There are a lot of programs because violence is a concern everywhere," says Mehas. "But if you can't see a situation from another point of view, you can't problem-solve effectively."

Teachers approved Second Step, which at the middle school level teaches empathy, impulse control, and anger management mainly through videotaped scenarios and scripted role playing. The school paid for Tabor to attend training. Mehas paid her own way.

"It's important to have at least two people at a training," Mehas says. "During the training, they can talk about how elements apply to their school, and they can assist each other once they're back at the school."

When they returned, Mehas and Tabor trained the vice principal, and the three provided schoolwide inservice the following fall—the year the target sixth-graders entered seventh grade.

"Everyone wanted the training—certificated and noncertificated," recalls Mehas. "And everyone came —cooks, janitors, office staff. We all wanted to speak the same language."

Everyone taught Second Step. Every noncertified member of the school community chose a teacher to team up with. Once a week for 40 minutes, parent volunteers handled office and other duties while teachers and staff taught the Second Step curriculum.

To help teachers handle the additional workload, Mehas and Tabor prepared "grab-and-go" folders each week. These contained that week's Second Step lesson complete with overheads, quizzes, role-playing situations, and anything else that was needed. Tabor also offered to interested teachers a weekly work session on innovative ways to teach that week's curriculum. About half showed up each week for tips.

At other times throughout the year, Mehas offered additional inservice training on the Second Step curriculum. At year's end, teachers evaluated the program and decided that the following year they would accelerate and concentrate the curriculum to speed up its impact. Instead of spreading out the lessons across many months, teaching them once a week as the curriculum developers recommend, Kennedy teaches Second Step for the first 40 minutes of the day for the first 15 days of the year. The faculty felt this intensive treatment would emphasize the importance of the message and get it across early in the year. Follow-up reminders would occur informally throughout the year as needed, teacher by teacher, class by class.

At the beginning of the second year, Kennedy became a PEP school, essentially adding the EBS team to its efforts and collecting data for the schoolwide profile. The team spent the first year developing four schoolwide rules, along with some strategies for teaching them to all students:

1. RESPECT OTHERS
- Use respectful words and tone of voice when talking to anyone
- Leave other people's property alone
- Work to solve problems constructively, without violence or abuse

2. BE PREPARED TO LEARN
- Be in your seat and ready when class begins
- Have appropriate materials
- Have your homework completed

3. FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS
- Follow reasonable instructions from staff and volunteers without argument or negative comment

4. DO YOUR BEST
- Participate positively in class
- Stay at task
- Learn all you can

The importance of schoolwide rules can't be overstated, according to Gerald Hasselman, Kennedy Vice Principal and EBS team member. Youngsters need to know exactly what is expected of them at school, not have the rules—and consequences—change from class to class.

"Otherwise, it's like driving down the highway where the speed limit changes from 55 to 70 back to 60 then down to 45, none of it marked," he says. "And sometimes the police let you off, sometimes they give you a ticket, sometimes you go to jail." If that would be frustrating to an adult, he continues, imagine how children feel. Yet that's exactly the guessing game created by inconsistency across classrooms.

By the third year of Kennedy's efforts, the "wild" sixth-graders were eighth-graders. One day, a teacher reported to Mehas that as he was walking through of the eighth-grade locker bay, he notice an enormous difference. Instead of seeing a lot of shoving, shouting, and razzing, he saw an orderly scene of good-natured exchanges and quiet attention to business. "He told me, 'Wow. I would never have guessed this was that sixth-grade class,'" says Mehas.

Even more remarkable, when the eighth-graders went on to high school the following year, the principal e-mailed Mehas to say the freshman class from Kennedy Middle School was "fabulous … the best in years."

"I have *never* gotten a letter like that from a principal," said Mehas. And there were more accolades to come. The principal of a district elementary school phoned Mehas to report that parents wanted the elementary school to adopt the programs Kennedy was using because they wanted the grade school to "have the same atmosphere as Kennedy Middle School had."

Added to this anecdotal record of success are the hard facts: The number of referrals has dropped by a whopping two-thirds. The before and after figures for the first three months of the school year were 450 (1995-96) and 105 (1998-99).

> "It's like driving down the highway where the speed limit changes from 55 to 70 back to 60 then down to 45 none of it marked. Sometimes the police let you off, sometimes they give you a ticket, sometimes you go to jail.

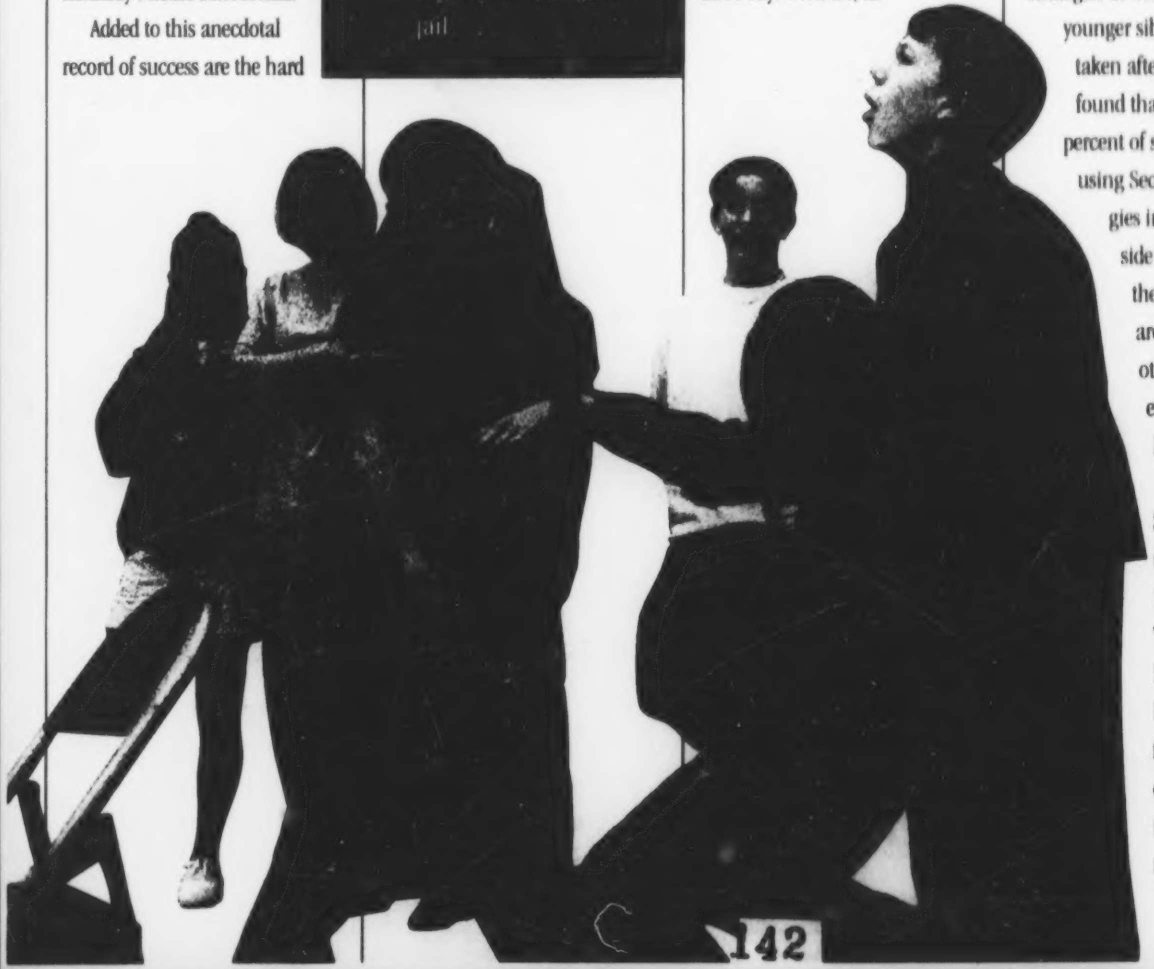
Individual results are also compelling. One sixth-grader came into Mehas' office on a discipline referral. "Your teacher said you were fighting," Mehas told the boy.

The youngster considered for a moment, then calmly replied: "I can see how from the teacher's point of view it might have seemed like we were fighting. But from our point of view, we were just wrestling."

The offender was suspended for three days because, as Mehas explains, "Anything that looks like a fight is treated like a fight." Still, she was impressed with the youngster's growing conflict-resolution skills. He was able to analyze instead of sulking or arguing. "He's obviously gaining awareness of his actions," she says, "and of other viewpoints."

And Kennedy's efforts are spreading beyond campus. Parents report that students are using Second Step problem-solving strategies at home and with younger siblings. A survey taken after the first year found that more than 30 percent of students reported using Second Step strategies in their lives outside school. "Even at the mall, students are nicer to each other," says seventh-grader Danielle Purkey.

Dr. Jeff Sprague, Codirector of the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, doesn't find this kind of outcome surprising. It's all in the research that led



Students act out ways to help each other deal with difficult situations.

to PEP.

Sprague has researched, published, and taught on the topic of preventing youth violence for 20 years. Four years ago, Sprague founded the institute with Dr. Hill Walker, a noted educator and author of numerous works, most recently *Antisocial Behavior in School: Strategies and Best Practices*, written with Geoff Colvin and Betsy Ramsey (Brooks/Cole, 1995). The institute, which has designed numerous programs aimed at reducing violence, developed PEP as a way to bring schools the latest research on reducing youth violence, in a practical, usable format.

"More children are coming to school not as ready to learn as in the past," says Sprague. "They lack social skills, they bring family issues. They come to school feeling bad . . . . Kids from stressful family situations learn that the best response is the harshest response. They think yelling, shoving, and hitting are the correct response to criticism. When they get to school, that's how they respond to stresses."

For these youngsters, says Sprague, their understanding of the punishment process is already distorted. Even mild punishment or criticism causes them to overreact. Even a neutral adult is seen as having negative intent.

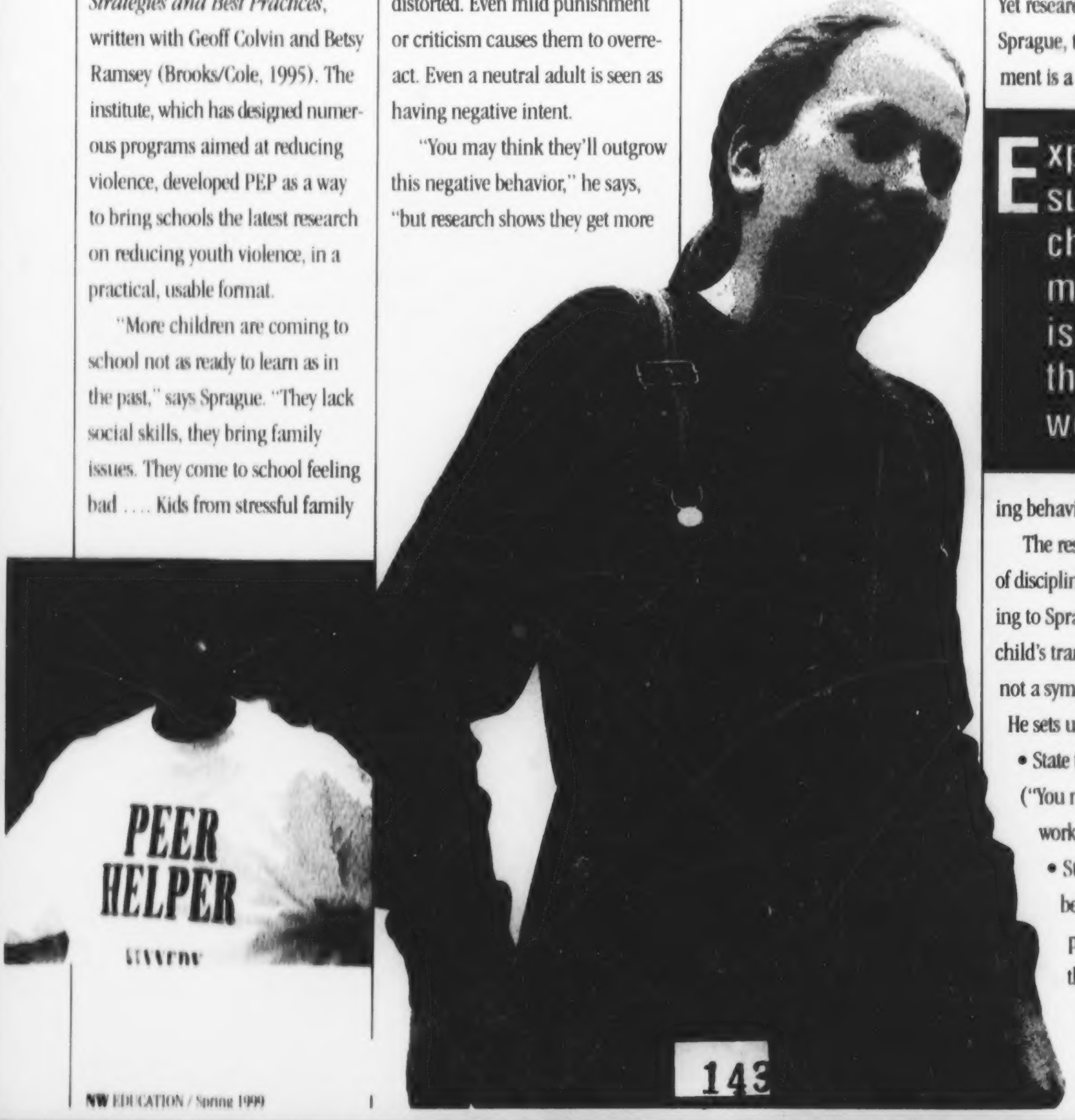
"You may think they'll outgrow this negative behavior," he says, "but research shows they get more intense and sophisticated in their negative behaviors."

Compounding the situation at school, teachers sometimes model inappropriate behavior. They lose their cool. Or they may unconsciously use negative feedback—sometimes even being "trained" by high-risk students to reward negative behavior by giving more and more attention to it. One study, Sprague says, found that teachers with the highest number of discipline referrals used as many as 10 negative reinforcements ("Keep your eyes on your work," "No talking") for every positive interaction. Yet research clearly shows, says Sprague, that positive reinforcement is a powerful tool for changing behavior.

Expelling or suspending children for misbehavior is "throwing them to the wolves."

The research-grounded method of discipline that works best, according to Sprague, is to treat the child's transgression as an error, not a symptom of bad character. He sets up a three-part solution:

- State the desired behavior ("You need to be doing your work")
- State the rule (which has been posted and previously taught) that the student is breaking
- Ask the student to



Kennedy "Peer Helpers" come to the aid of fellow students.

demonstrate the rule

Sprague believes that expelling or suspending children for misbehavior is "throwing them to the wolves." When a child is expelled, he may find himself in the company of family members involved in drugs or gangs—a setting hardly conducive to creating desired behavior. Instead, Sprague advocates restricting privileges like school dances or recess, or requiring youngsters to do school service.

Sprague also advocates "punishment by rewards"—in other words, preventing discipline problems by rewarding good behavior. "People sometimes think that rewarding desired behavior will 'spoil' children," Sprague says. Many parents and educators believe that by the time kids are 13, they must accept the consequences of their decisions. But to Sprague, those young teenagers are still learning how to make decisions. Besides, he notes, teachers are often unaware of a hurtful or traumatic incident that happened that morning in the home or in the hallway that may have caused a child to lose control of good decisionmaking.

Schools need to focus constantly on teaching children the skills they need to become more resistant to violence—just as drug-refusal skills are taught—and to give them feedback on how they're doing, Sprague stresses. In a sense, he says, kids need to learn "anger-refusal" skills.

All this takes teacher and administrator time in the initial stages, Sprague admits. But schools where safety is a priority find a way.

"Most teachers would gladly trade teaching behavior skills for . . . a classroom of interested, well-mannered learners," Sprague says. "And within a few years, the new culture becomes not a special project, but just the way the school does business."

Kathy White, Lane ESD Prevention Specialist, has been helping the county's 16 school districts adopt PEP's three primary practices—collecting data, developing tailored strategies, and using a curriculum to increase social skills and reduce violence. She offers staff development, consultation, and assistance in finding funds. The institute and ESD share the cost of White's position.

In the three years she's been helping schools launch PEP efforts, White has seen a dramatic drop in the number of discipline referrals. "By the second or third year," she says, "schools are seeing a drop of 50 percent or more."

Kennedy's EBS team, which developed schoolwide rules last year, is now working to develop practices for the small group of youngsters who need additional intervention. Some kids can't be reached by schoolwide efforts. But teaching peaceful practices to everyone inoculates the group, Tabor says. If most students are solving problems in nonviolent ways, they serve as role models for the others. If 500 of 570 kids are using good problem-solving skills and, say, 20 kids show extremes of undesired behavior, those 20 are isolated within the larger group. They have less chance of becoming negative leaders for increasingly larger numbers of children, as sometimes happens.

A criticism leveled by students is that some Second Step materials use language or hypotheticals that strike some kids as "hokey" or implausible.

"It's good we know this, that we're learning this," says Jodi Parmer, 14, an eighth-grader. "But some of the (examples in the) videos aren't what would really happen."

The eighth-graders have been revising some of the role-playing scripts to make them more current. For example, one scenario depicts a student lending a tape recorder to a friend. The new version substitutes a CD player—a more likely possession for today's kids. And regardless of how uncool some language may be, Jodi nonetheless sees positive effects in her life.

"I don't think the school *makes* us act nice to each other," she says. "I have friends in every grade. I know what they feel like, empathize with how they might feel . . . . In school you can get in trouble if you're caught (being unkind), but outside there's nobody making you be nice—you just do it."

One more viewpoint comes from Tim Finkle, custodial maintenance coordinator, and 22-year veteran of school hallways and byways where kids congregate.

"Kids are learning how to be more respectful of each other and adults," Finkle says. "There used to be cliques, and there were still some in the second year. This year, none. I've said over and over to all the staff, this is my best year ever in school. The best year ever. We're reaping what we have sown."

RESOURCE NOTE: *The institute is in the process of developing a manual for educators interested in tailoring PEP for their school. For more information, contact the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, College of Education, 1265 University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403-1265, (541) 346-3592, ivdb@darkwing.uoregon.edu.* ■

NEW ATTITUDE

Linking Kids to the Larger Community Can Turn Lives Around

[illegible]

When 16-year-old David [illegible]ed the glass [illegible] at school last [illegible], he was surprised as his [illegible]mates when he wasn't sent [to] the principal's office, a place [where] David spent considerable time. A student who had never had much success in school, David had just received an A — his first ever — on a math test and he pounded the wall in exuberance. Recognizing that his outburst stemmed from excitement and pride, not anger and frustration — another first for David — Vice Principal Ed Legace simply told him to "cool it" and made him pay to replace the glass. He also congratulated David on the test.

Now a junior at Crook County High School in Prineville, Oregon, David is part of the Rotational Work Crew, an intensive service learning program designed for students who are struggling in school for academic, behavioral, or social reasons. The program blends community service projects and classroom learning to pique students' interest in school.

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teach them concrete skills, and help them accomplish real tasks. The changes in attitude and behavior that the kids exhibit are perhaps the program's most beneficial outcome. Given the current educational climate clouded by high-profile incidents of school violence across the country, educators are scrutinizing learning environments and behavior problems more closely than ever.

In a variety of similar programs throughout the Northwest, educators are learning that what kids do outside the classroom can greatly improve their behavior during the regular school day. Kids involved in effective out-of-school programs tend to do a better job of staying on task and avoiding fights in school, research suggests. Schools that offer service-learning, after-school, and mentoring programs are finding that the some of students' most critical learning experiences often take place outside the classroom.

FITTING IN BY PITCHING IN

Many of the 900 students at Crook County High School are involved in service learning, an educational practice in which students learn and develop through organized community-service projects that are tied to the curriculum. Combining elements of such tested educational practices as experiential education and student-centered learning, service learning emphasizes problem solving, critical thinking, and independent judgment. Students on the Rotational Work Crew (which operates as a school-to-work program of the Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce) get a heavier dose of these lessons than others, spending three hours each morning on service projects instead of attending structured classes.

Service-learning projects can also be classroom-based—for example, a shop class building wheelchair ramps for a local business. For kids on the work crew, however, projects that place them in the community allow them to witness firsthand the contributions they are making.

In one such project, the crew is building "quail hotels" on the Ochoco National Grasslands. Each hotel consists of 20 to 25 juniper trees that the students cut down and pile in a crisscrossed mound. The birds get protection from predators and the elements, which can claim as much as 80 percent of the quail population each year. The students get fresh air and exercise, along with a chance to see what elements of biology and ecology look like in living color.

Another project places students as peer tutors in nearby Ochoco Elementary School, where they work one-on-one with younger kids who need extra attention. To emphasize the learning component of this service project, Tami Barnes, the adult leader who supervises the work crew and runs the peer-tutoring program, used the description for a teacher's aide position to discuss the job skills students would need if they were applying for this opening.

The positive effects of service learning are well grounded in research. According to the National Youth Leadership Council, study after study has shown service learning to be effective in promoting growth in a wide variety of domains that include academic learning, more complex thinking and problem-solving skills, heightened self-esteem, a deepened sense of social responsibility, and a greater inclination to participate actively in the community.

Many schools are plagued by disruptive behaviors from a handful of students who demand more time and attention than the rest of the class, exhausting teachers' stores of energy and patience. Removing struggling kids from the regular classroom, even for part of the day, provides these students with more individual attention, allows them to work at their own pace, and gives them an opportunity to learn through hands-on, genuine experiences instead of studying vague concepts in a textbook or on a blackboard.

Principal Chris Yaeger believes the program not only gives the students a foundation of positive experiences to build on, but also gives the school some leverage in working with them. Because Barnes and Billie Estridge, the special education teacher who coordinates the academic component of the program, work so closely with the crew kids, conflicts are dealt with earlier and kept smaller. "One of the first things that is noticeable is that kids who have had a history of being in the office for discipline reasons, we now see very infrequently," says Yaeger. "They come to school feeling better instead of feeling they are going to be defeated or feeling frustrated."

At Crook County High, students like David are proof that the program is working. Once described as "constantly in the office," "defensive," and "not part of the system," kids on the work crew are now more positive and more involved in the school. The Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform says that because students in service projects learn to work cooperatively and to relate to peers and adults in new and constructive ways, their self-image improves "in a legitimate way, not because of imagined good feelings but rather as a result of increased competence and positive experience." The service aspect of the program enables kids who were once a cause of problems to become a source of solutions. As more and more people demonstrate confidence in their ability to complete important tasks, the kids develop confidence in themselves.

Crook County's school-to-work coordinator Beverlee Jackson is a firm believer in the power of service learning. "It can benefit all kids, but it is especially beneficial for those students who don't see themselves as productive citizens. They find themselves suddenly having successes they haven't had before," she says. "It is transforming these kids in ways we never expected."

OPENING DOORS TO LATCHKEY KIDS

After-school programs are another area where savvy educators are focusing their attention. In an age of single parents and double-income families, an increasing number of children are being left on their own after school. Lacking constructive activities, these "latchkey" kids are more inclined, at best, to spend hours watching television or hanging out with their peers and, at worst, to engage in a number of risky behaviors.

Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids, a 1998 report jointly published by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, cites plenty of reasons for developing quality after-school programs, including:

- Children and teens who are unsupervised during the hours after school are "far more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors, receive poor grades, and drop out of school"
- Recent data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation make clear that the peak hours for violent juvenile crime are from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- A 1994 Harris poll in which more than half of teachers singled out "children who are left on their own after school" as the primary explanation of students' difficulties in class

Instead of sending kids out on the streets or home to empty houses, after-school programs provide safe havens where children can reinforce classroom learning, participate in sports and recreational activities, and build healthy rela-

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tionships with peers and adults. By giving kids positive alternatives, quality programs can make the hours after school the time for engaging, enriching activities.

When the school day ends at Neil Armstrong Middle School in Forest Grove, Oregon, most of the kids hoist their backpacks and head for the exits. Not so for 30 energetic boys and girls making a beeline to the gym, where they "six step" and "windmill" to rhythmic hip-hop beats. These lucky kids are members of the Mid-City Breakers, a hugely popular after-school break-dancing club run by Washington County Special Deputy Sheriff Tomas Sepulveda, who is also the school's safety resource officer.

Break dancing gives the kids a strenuous workout and an opportunity for self-expression through dance and music. Sepulveda believes the program boosts students' self-esteem and combats shyness because participants are required to develop a routine and perform individually in front of large audiences. The troupe has performed in several schools, at parades and fairs, on television, and even during a half-time show at a Portland Trail Blazers basketball game.

Nearly three years ago, Sepulveda was patrolling the school after hours and came across a group of boys break dancing in the halls. When he told them they had to leave, the boys protested that they just needed a place with a smooth floor to practice their dance moves. "They didn't have anywhere else to go," Sepulveda says. "So I approached the principal about letting them use the school after hours." The principal agreed, as long as Sepulveda would take responsibility for the kids.

Attendance quickly grew as word of the program spread, and now the school gym is a hub of activity during practice every afternoon. Other kids show up to watch, sprawled on the floor talking or working on homework in the chairs in front of the stage. The program is officially open to seventh- and eighth-grade students from the middle school, but it has become so popular that fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders, as well as high school students, now regularly attend.

Sepulveda's rules for participation are simple but strict:

1. **Go to school.**
2. **Get good grades. Kids have to maintain at least a 2.0 grade-point average or they cannot participate in performances.**
3. **Stay out of trouble. Students can have no more than two administrative referrals in one semester, must respect teachers and peers, and cannot be involved in gangs.**

Research shows that children, especially adolescents, crave excitement and group activity. If they can't find it in structured programs, they become far more likely to find it in gangs. The students in the Mid-City Breakers tend to be those who are not participating in sports or other extracurricular activities, due to lack of funds or interest, Sepulveda notes. He has created a program that kids look forward to because it involves an activity that naturally draws them. This means they show up every day and follow Sepulveda's rules.

Tim Greseth, who is the Director of Corps Programs for the Forest Grove School District and

coordinates a variety of extended school-day activities in Washington County, believes that getting kids excited about coming is a crucial first step in a successful after-school program. "You have to capture them by getting their attention," he stresses. "It shouldn't be more of the same. A good after-school program must be novel, engaging, exciting stuff. Then they'll come."

STAYING ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Another innovative program in Forest Grove is a group mentoring and enrichment program called T.E.A.M. (Together Experiencing Advancement and Motivation), a sustained self-enhancement program for girls in fifth through 12th grades that operates at three sites in the district: Tom McCall Upper Elementary School, Neil Armstrong Middle School, and Forest Grove High School.

Experts agree that a common characteristic of "resilient" children is having stable relationships with one or more caring adults. Evidence cited in *Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids* indicates that children with the opportunity to make rich social connections during after-school hours are more well adjusted and happier than those who don't have such opportunities. In a recent study, 83 percent of school-age child-care staff in 71 programs said that some children who had been socially rejected by peers learned healthy ways to make new friends because of their participation in after-school programs.

Girls in T.E.A.M., which meets until 6 p.m. on Monday through Thursday evenings, get at least three hours of focused adult contact and social activities a day. Program Coordinator Kelli Aiken says that T.E.A.M. was designed as a prevention program to decrease risky behaviors in girls by increasing confidence and competence, implementing communication and problem-solving skills, and exposing them to a variety of opportunities to grow, learn, and make healthy life choices.

So why not include boys? According to Aiken, in 1995 the state conducted studies and found that 60 percent of the resources for out-of-school activities were being spent on boys, either directly or indirectly (for example, a coed basketball team that only boys played on). A statewide mandate for gender-specific services to close the gap—the only one like it in the nation—spurred a grant from the Washington County Commission on Children and Families to launch the program. Aiken sees a real need for a girls-only program, "partly because if a boy is dealing with some issues, he is more likely to act out in a visible way, whereas girls tend to turn that in. They may be the quiet ones in class, but you don't know if something is wrong with them because they turn to eating disorders or something else." Adolescent girls are also more likely to experience depression or attempt suicide than adolescent boys.

Many T.E.A.M. activities stem from Developing Nurturing Skills and Nurturing Yourself, a school-based curriculum that includes student-driven activities. Each site tailors the activities to be developmentally appropriate for that age group, and the different sessions

See NEW ATTITUDE, Page 55

WITHOUT HELP TROUBLED KIDS CAN EXPLODE IN RAGE

HEEDING

By JUDY BLANKENSHIP

"In those first frantic days, people were all asking, 'Why, why, why?'" Thurston High School Principal Larry Bentz told *The Oregonian* months after the shooting in Springfield, Oregon, that left two students dead and 25 injured. "It became pretty clear early on that we weren't going to know why, that there was no clear reason we could cling to, so the community found comfort in each other and doing anything they could to help."

The soul searching of parents, teachers, and other professionals in the wake of recent school shootings around the country—shootings that in the Northwest region alone have left eight dead and close to 30 injured—has produced a clear consensus that youthful violence can't be pinned on one cause. However, ominous warning signs pointed the way to each tragedy. A look backward into the lives of the young killers—all boys ranging in age from 10 to 16—reveals a surprising number of common characteristics. Each boy felt inferior and picked on, and blamed his problems on others—fellow students, a teacher, a principal. Most, if not all of the boys, were seriously depressed and suicidal. Some were trapped in desperate family situations well known to local social service agencies. Several were heavily immersed in violent video games, movies, and TV. All had easy access to high-powered guns.

"The signs were there," school board President Bob Herron in Bethel, Alaska, told the *Boston Globe* after 16-year-old Evan Ramsey shot and killed the principal of his high school and a classmate in February 1997. "But for whatever reason, we didn't hear them. We were in a comfort zone where we thought, 'That can't happen here.'"

Three weeks after the shootings in Springfield, President Clinton directed the Education and Justice departments to develop a guide to help adults recognize and reach out to troubled children quickly and effectively. Released in August, *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* tells parents, educators, and other concerned citizens how to identify early childhood behaviors that indicate potential violence (see the sidebar on Page 43). If we understand what leads to violence and the types of intervention that have proven effective in preventing it, the report says, we can make our schools safer.

SEEDS OF VIOLENCE

"BOY WAS HARD TO HANDLE EVEN AS A TODDLER." *The Oregonian* headline referred to 15-year-old Kip Kinkel, charged with shooting and killing his parents the day before he fired 50 rounds of ammunition into his school cafeteria in Springfield. Interviews with relatives, classmates, teachers, and friends, done over a period of two and a half months by reporter Maxine Bernstein, revealed a boy who was insecure as a young child, sensitive, hyperactive, and easily distracted. Kip's behavioral problems in first grade caused his parents to worry he had dyslexia or some other learning disability.

Psychologists generally agree that extreme aggressiveness, especially in boys, tends to appear early, cuts across socioeconomic lines, and, without effective intervention, can continue in a progressive developmental pattern toward violence. However, Kevin Dwyer, David Osher, and Cynthia Warger, the authors of *Early Warning, Timely Response*, point out that the potential for violence is reduced significantly when a child has a positive, meaningful connection to an adult, be it at home, in school, or in the community.

A toddler who has several temper tantrums a day, who is impulsive, distracted, and fearless, and who consistently refuses to do what parents ask is sending an early message that he (or, less likely, she) has not learned the normal social skills of regulating feelings, handling impulses, and using appropriate behavior to get emotional needs met.

If this toddler becomes a kindergartner who disrupts classroom activities, attacks other children, cultivates few friendships, performs poorly in school, and creates discipline problems at home, parents and teachers should be concerned enough to seek professional help, according to the American Psycho-

THE SIGNS

logical Association. By third or fourth grade, without effective intervention, this child's aggressive behavior will likely be entrenched, and the stage set for more serious problems such as cruelty toward pets and other animals, fire setting, stealing, lying, and bullying.

In most cases, the child will be a boy. Why the special problem with boys? A major identifying trait of boys is their tendency to want to be in control, explains Portland forensic psychologist Dr. Donald True. "Boys are more action-oriented than girls, more likely to act out impulsively and to think less about the consequences of their actions. They tend to use their assertive energy to change a situation if they are unhappy." All these characteristics are fine when they fall within the normal range of behavior, True says. But when a boy is not doing well at a moderate level—when he is being teased or bullied, for example, and feels a sense of powerlessness—he can overreact by trying to get too much control. Once he moves into this "hyperstate," the stage is set for violence, directed either against others or against himself.

"Professionals who predict risk of violence have known for years that when someone is depressed and suicidal, they're potentially homicidal," True says. "So a young person thinks: 'I'm feeling like killing myself, but if you push me, I'll kill you.'"

Girls tend to delay action if they feel frustrated, rejected, or angry. They stop and think, verbalize their feelings, and use less aggressive means to deal with their social environments. Girls are more likely to signal problems with inward-directed aggressions such as depression or eating disorders.

Researchers who study aggressive children have found that without early and effective intervention, bad behavior tends to remain consistent no matter how parents and teachers respond. Cajolery, patience, and understanding seem to have as little effect as firmness, groundings, or even corporal punishment. Often emotionally disconnected from parents and other adults, aggressive children can seem impervious to the pain or embarrassment their behavior causes those who love them.

Faith and Bill Kinkel, both experienced teachers, recognized their son's problems early and intervened in ways that would seem appropriate and timely to most of us. In first grade, when Kip was unhappy and bothered that he was smaller than his classmates, he was held back an extra year to allow him to mature. In middle school, when Kip had trouble with his teachers and his first run-in with the police, his father home-schooled him for several months so he would not fail the year. Kip told friends he was taking Ritalin to control his temper. By high school he was regularly seeing counselors and psychologists for his moodiness and anger-management problems. He began taking Prozac, an antidepressant drug.

But the advantages Kip enjoyed—a tight-knit community, attentive parents, economic security, and professional help—didn't prevent him from growing obsessed with guns and bombs. He bragged to his friends in middle school that he had blown up squirrels. In high school, he gave a talk about bomb-making in a speech class shortly before the shootings.

Perhaps the fact that Kip's parents—ironically, both highly respected teachers—were clearly aware of their son's problems and were trying to get help from professionals, prevented others in the school and community from intervening before it was too late. After the tragedy, many friends, neighbors, and classmates recounted chilling incidents of Kip's behavior that should have caused alarm bells to go off. Yet no one felt it was their business to "interfere" or take action.

The authors of *Early Warning, Timely Response* emphasize that safe schools depend on everyone in a school community taking personal responsibility for reducing the risk for violence. Teachers, bus drivers, students, parents, friends, administrators, and members of the community should all be prepared to spot behavioral and emotional problems that indicate a child is troubled, know how to "read" problem behavior within a situational or developmental context (if, for example, the child has a history of discipline problems), and know what appropriate action should be taken.

FLAWED FAMILIES

Other children who explode in rage and violence come from the sort of family backgrounds we associate with troubled kids. Poverty, poor parenting, drug and alcohol problems, emotional and physical abuse, negative attitudes toward schooling, and domestic violence all provide a fertile breeding ground for a child to develop antisocial attitudes and aggressive behavior, according to Dr. Hill Walker at the Oregon Social Learning Center, who with his colleagues has spent decades identifying the parenting practices that produce healthy, well-adjusted children.

The greater the number of risks a young child is exposed to, and the longer the exposure, Walker says, the more likely he will see the world as a dangerous place and develop into a hostile, self-centered adolescent who reacts aggressively to real or imagined slights.

Evan Ramsey, tried as an adult last year and convicted of two counts of first-degree murder for the school shootings in Bethel, was such a child. By the time Evan was seven, his father was in prison for storming the *Anchorage Times* newspaper offices with an assault weapon, and his alcoholic mother was unable to care for her three sons. Evan and his brothers were taken into state custody. A psychologist who examined Evan at the time warned that the boy was depressed and needed counseling and a safe home environment. Yet over the next three years, Evan bounced from one foster home to another—10 in all. The year before the shootings, he had 12 disciplinary infractions at school and two suspensions. A friend told a reporter that Evan was sometimes teased by fellow students as "brain-dead" and "retarded."

The authors of *Early Warning, Timely Response* note that social withdrawal is a common response when a young person feels picked on, teased, bullied, and ridiculed for perceived differences or inadequacies. The resulting isolation, combined with feelings of frustration and anger, can spell disaster for a troubled child. Two of the four young killers in the Northwest school shootings specifically targeted classmates who teased them. The government report suggests that any school-violence prevention and response plan include a code of conduct that covers antibullying rules, and clearly lays out sanctions against behavior such as teasing and hurtful name-calling. Some schools are going farther and implementing antibullying curricula. (See Page 10 for a sampling of curricula.)

"Hey Everybody!! . . . I feel rejected, rejected, not so much alone, but rejected," Evan wrote in a notebook the night before the shootings. "Life sucks in its own way, so I killed a little and killed myself. " Evan had often talked of suicide and admitted after the tragedy that he expected to die the day he took the gun to school.

MEDIA MURDERS

The average American child witnesses 8,000 murders on TV and in the movies before finishing elementary school, according to a 1992 study by the American Psychological Association. By age 18, this child will have seen 40,000 murders, and spent more time watching television than any other single activity except sleeping.

After 30 years of research, psychologists and media experts no longer bother to dispute that children are affected by their exposure

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

The authors of *Early Warning, Timely Response* caution parents and educators that no one warning sign is sufficient for predicting aggression and violence. Rather, these signs must be taken in context and read as indicators that a child may need help.

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to media violence. The debate now is why violent images take hold of the imaginations of some children, and not others. Millions of kids watch graphic depictions of death and destruction on TV every day, yet only a few pick up guns and act out their fantasies.

"Television and the movies have never, in my experience, turned a responsible youngster into a criminal," Stanton Samenow, author of *Before It's Too Late: Why Some Kids Get into Trouble and What Parents Can Do About It*, told *Time* magazine last April. However, for kids who have never learned to control their own aggression, growing up in a culture saturated with media violence can make a lethal difference. "(When) a youngster who is already inclined toward antisocial behavior hears of a particular crime," Samenow says, "it feeds an already fertile mind." Copycat crimes inspired by movies and TV have become a serious concern in recent years.

Barry Loukaitis, a 14-year-old honors student at Frontier Middle School in Moses Lake, Washington, walked into his algebra classroom in February 1996 and shot his teacher in the back with a powerful hunting rifle before turning his gun on a student who had teased him. Both the teacher and the teaser died, along with another student who was in the line of fire. Earlier, Barry told a friend he thought it would be "pretty cool" to go on a killing rampage like the lead characters in *Natural Born Killers*, one of his favorite films. Jurors at his trial watched a Pearl Jam music video, *Jeremy*, which Barry's mother claimed had inspired him. It features a troubled teen who fantasizes violent revenge against classmates who taunt him.

Kip Kinkel was so enmeshed in violent television and computer games that his parents discontinued their cable service and took away his computer in the months before the shootings at Thurston.

"Children watch movies and television programs that glorify violence and fail to teach them how to express their rage in nonviolent ways," says Kevin Dwyer of the National Association for School Psychologists. "In too many cases, the message is: I am emotionally angry; I'm going to kill someone."

Newly added to the violent media culture are video games like the ones that filled after-school hours for Evan Ramsey and his friends. A chilling description of kids' fascination with this pastime comes from Evan's 14-year-old brother William. "I love playing Golden Eve," he told a reporter from the *Boston Globe*, referring to a virtual-reality video game that allows the player to track and kill opponents with an arsenal of firearms. "It shows it like real

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ny school violence prevention and response plan should include a code of conduct that covers antibullying rules and clearly lays out sanctions against behavior such as teasing and hurtful name-calling

life. . . . My favorite gun is a 9 mm automatic. I grab two of those and I see a guy and I hit the trigger. I put all 64 rounds in one guy. He's on the ground and I just keep on shooting until he disappears. Or I'll take a rocket launcher and shoot at their heads. It's cool."

GETTING EVEN WITH GUNS

The greatest health threat to American school children is not disease, but guns, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A few mind-numbing statistics: In the United States, a child dies of gunshot wounds every two hours, the equivalent of a classroom of 25 children every two days; the rate of firearm deaths among teens is 75 percent higher than 20 years ago; American children are 12 times more likely to die from guns than their peers in 25 other industrialized nations, including Israel and Northern Ireland.

Despite the best efforts of school officials and lawmakers across the country to keep weapons out of schools, guns still show up in hallways, lockers, and on playgrounds. Handguns, small and easy to hide, are especially difficult for schools to detect and control.

The day before the Thurston shooting, Kip Kinkel was expelled from school for buying a stolen gun from another student and hiding it in his locker. That evening he allegedly shot both parents with a .22-caliber semiautomatic rifle his father had bought him the previous year (a gun reportedly kept in a locked cabinet under the Kinkel parents' bed, along with other guns Bill Kinkel had confiscated from his son.) In the following days, among the arsenal of guns and bombs secreted in Kip's room and around the Kinkel house, police found a pistol and sawed-off shotgun. Both had been bought from classmates at school, according to news reports.

School security experts estimate that 80 percent of the firearms students bring to school come from home. It is no surprise that the potential for suicide, accidental death, and school shootings is greatly magnified when there is a gun in the house.

The three guns Barry Loukaitis carried into his algebra class in Moses Lake, Washington, belonged to his father, who had taught him to shoot. Friends testified in court that Barry used to play at home with his family guns as if they were toys. When he decided to "get even" with a classmate who had teased him, Barry had only to go to an unlocked gun cabinet in the living room for a high-powered rifle and a handgun, and to the family car for a second handgun.

The 12-gauge, three-foot shotgun Evan Ramsey took to school hidden in his baggy jeans had hung for years on an open rack next to the front door in his foster home. "It's so normal here to have access to guns," his foster mother Sue Hare, then district superintendent of schools, told the *Boston Globe* after the shooting. She had bought the weapon years earlier for bird hunting, she said, and didn't consider it capable of killing anyone.

BABIES' BRAINS

Still, millions of kids are exposed to family strife, TV violence, and guns without killing their classmates and teachers. What combination of factors causes one child to lash out, while another in similar circumstances deals with his environment in a nonviolent way?

New research into how the brain develops and how the seeds of violence are sown in the womb and in the nursery is providing some intriguing answers that may help predict violence and lead the way to more effective early intervention.

Violence, like all behavior, is brain-based, argues family therapist Robin Karr-Morse, coauthor with Meredith Wiley of the new book *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence*.

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

number of core principles from research and practice can assist schools as they draft plans for violence prevention and response. They include:

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"Biological factors like prematurity, the effects of drugs in utero, birth trauma, tiny brain hemorrhages, attention deficit disorder (ADD), or a difficult temperament can render a baby vulnerable," Karr-Morse told the Portland City Club recently. These biological conditions are then compounded by such social factors as immature parents, mental illness, domestic violence, or criminal involvement, she explained.

Everything that happens early to a child, during gestation and in the first 24 months of life, creates either relative receptivity to, or relative resistance to, factors that may catalyze violence later in a child's life. "We basically have decided before we can speak our first sentence whether or not the world is a safe place and whether or not we can trust another human being, and it's literally wired into our brains," writes Wiley. "Availability of guns, or the violent modeling on television, are absorbed very differently by a little brain that is rageful and detached, than by a brain that is connected and empathic with other people."

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

The recent string of school shootings in the Northwest began in April 1994, when a troubled 10-

…the schools depend on everyone in a school community taking personal responsibility for reducing the risk for violence.

year-old in Butte, Montana, shot a classmate on the playground in a dispute over a ball. When asked why he did it, the little boy answered, "Nobody loves me, anyway." School personnel learned only after the shooting that his divorced parents both had AIDS, and his mother had recently been charged with killing a former husband in Colorado.

Butte Public Schools swung into action soon after the tragedy to design a safety-net system to cover every school child.

"In Butte we have created an interagency, site-based safety team at each school, made up of parents, human services workers, law enforcement officers, and others from community organizations and religious groups," says Kate Stetzner, Butte's Superintendent. The district has initiated a parent-directed peer mediation program and conflict-resolution trainings. It has adopted a "bullyproofing" curriculum developed in Colorado. And it has created a crisis-response plan that covers everything from guns to earthquakes, specifying such details as who should call 911 and who will handle communication with parents. "Collaboration within the school community is the key," says Stetzner, who was principal at the school where the shooting occurred.

Bill Ferguson, the new Superintendent of the Lower Kuskokwim School District in Bethel, says his staff has initiated a variety of strategies in the wake of the shooting there. The cornerstone is a districtwide antiviolence curriculum (see Page 20 for details) that starts with preschoolers and works with them through middle school to help them control impulses, manage anger, and feel empathy for others. Besides developing safety plans for the 26 schools in the isolated, 10,000-square-mile district, more itinerant social workers now travel to village schools to meet the needs of at-risk students (an expensive operation on this roadless river delta, where travelers are dependent on airplanes, skiffs, and snow machines). And the district is seeking closer connections with human service agencies.

"We're trying to develop programs to pull parents and the community into the schools," Ferguson says, "to make them aware of the issues young people are facing in the world."

Ferguson maintains, however, that it will always be difficult for school personnel, given the present level of resources, to identify students like Evan who may do something violent. "One of our big problems is that we're being held accountable for quality education at the same time that we're expected to meet the social and emotional needs of our students," he says. "We're not picking up any extra federal or state dollars to do this. … I think it's something the society as a whole will have to address."

Ron Bloodworth, who coordinates youth suicide prevention efforts for Oregon, agrees that schools cannot do it alone. "These are community issues, and although the school has an important part to play, other players in the community have to step up to the plate," he said in a recent interview. Bloodworth is working with a task force of professionals, lay people, and social services agencies to come up with a statewide suicide prevention plan to be implemented in 1999. Linkages among schools, social services, and community organizations are critical to successfully implementing antiviolence programs such as depression screening and suicide prevention, Bloodworth says.

According to Stetzner, a member of a presidential task force on school safety, help may be on the way. She attended the first White House summit on school safety in October, when President Clinton pledged $600 million dollars to revamp the Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act. "This means that all the things we know make a difference in developing comprehensive safe-school plans are going to be possible because we are going to give schools the money they need to do these things," Stetzner says.

One of the most hopeful signs, she says, is a changing attitude within the legal system. Stetzner paraphrases a remark by Attorney General Janet Reno, who said the need for early intervention is finally being recognized in the law-enforcement community. The answer, Reno said, is prevention, not prisons. ■

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents can help create safe schools. Here are some ideas that parents in other communities have tried:

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CATCHING KIDS BEFOR

STORY & PHOTOS By JOYCE RIHA LINIK

SEATTLE, Washington—Not far from the coffeehouses, clam bars, and bookshops of Seattle's waterfront district lies the Duwamish Waterway—poetic to the tongue, but harsh to the eye. This industrial stretch of shipping docks and smokestacks greets visitors to West Seattle, where one of the city's largest public housing communities can be found. Like those of other cities, the High Point housing complex's concrete facades are weathered and scarred with graffiti, much of it scrawled by gangs marking their turf.

Headlines tell the story: "GIRL SCOUTS EARN BADGES BEHIND BARS," "TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY SENTENCED FOR SETTING MAN ON FIRE," "HONORS STUDENT CHARGED WITH DEATH OF HER NEWBORN," "JUVENILE CHARGED WITH MURDER OF 65-YEAR-OLD WOMAN."

Kids in King County are committing more serious crimes at younger ages, according to the county Department of Youth Services. The agency also reports a growing number of offenses committed by adolescent girls and an increase in gang involvement for both boys and girls.

Because of this rash of juvenile violence, Seattle was one of six sites nationwide to receive a $1.4 million annual SafeFutures grant from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

THEY FALL | WHEN CULTURES CLASH, YOUTHS CAN CRASH'

Managed by the Seattle Department of Housing and Human Services, the five-year project focuses on intervention efforts for children involved in the juvenile justice system or those at risk of becoming involved.

But SafeFutures goes one step farther. It works to prevent the need for any intervention at all—to catch children before they fall.

Project goals are:

- Reduction in family, individual, and community factors that may cause youth to become perpetrators or victims of antisocial or violent acts
- Promotion of family, individual, and community factors that protect youth
- Implementation of effective interventions for youth and families of youth involved in all levels of the juvenile justice system

Individual projects supported by SafeFutures run the gamut from preventive tutoring programs to counseling to mentoring programs for juveniles once they get out of detention. The broad-based initiative links community organizations and agencies across the full spectrum of child development, from before birth through adulthood.

"We need to look at the root causes—at what's happening that causes children to use weapons," says SafeFutures manager Harla

Tumbleson. "Kids don't have to carry guns if they have a value system in place and recognize the futility of violence."

Sharon Chew, coordinator of the effort, agrees. "We really need to go beyond putting metal detectors in schools," she says. "We need to do everything possible to promote the well-being of kids."

IN SEARCH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

After scouring local statistics, project designers zeroed in on three groups most in need of prevention and intervention:

1. Cambodian and Vietnamese youth
2. Girls
3. Violent, chronic juvenile offenders

Records showed that Asians as a whole were doing well academically and financially. But Japanese and Korean subgroups were skewing the curve upward. Newer Asian immigrant populations—specifically, Cambodians and Vietnamese—were encountering extreme economic and social deprivation. Substance abuse, domestic violence, and teen pregnancy were prevalent in these subgroups.

Among Cambodian and Vietnamese youth, both males and females showed high rates of school suspensions, expulsions, and dropping out, as well as early entrance into crime. Alarming, too, was the growing gang affiliation among these Southeast Asian groups.

So the Delridge section of West Seattle, where the High Point complex houses many immigrant families, became a project target area. At the neighborhood middle school, counselor and intervention specialist Ginny Kalkoske is involved in SafeFutures' Interagency Staffing Group, a coalition of organizations that pool information and resources to better serve the community's children.

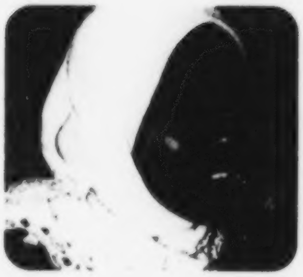
Kalkoske's job involves intervening when kids act out. That can mean meeting with the student, talking to parents, or appearing before a judge. After seven years at Denny Middle School, she's seen it all—and heard what it looks like from the students' side. As children of immigrants and refugees, she says, "they're struggling to acculturate—to learn the language and fit in," not an easy task. "Often, it leads to a denial of ethnic culture and background as they try to be as American as possible."

Kids feel disconnected from both their Cambodian heritage and their American environment. The identity crisis that sends most teens for a spin hits these kids like a tornado. They find themselves asking: "Am I American? Am I Cambodian?" The solution, Kalkoske believes, lies in finding some balance—recognition of both.

The SafeFutures project provides counseling, too. Warya Pothan, a Cambodian immigrant who works with SafeFutures, notes the dire need for mental health assistance in this community. "Most of these kids were born after all the killing," she says, referring to the murderous four-year reign of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s, when about one-third of the Cambodian population was executed. "But they have grown up through intense grieving."

Half of the parents Pothan encounters were raised by substitute parents. On their way to America, most lived in concentration camps in Cambodia or refugee camps in Thailand. Primarily peasant farmers from rural Cambodia, they are ill-prepared for life in an American metropolis. Both language and culture begin to divide them from their children.

Stories of family rifts are commonplace. Often, the power pyramid has been turned upside down. Kids gain the upper hand through language. They translate and interpret—often to their own advantage—for their non-English-speaking parents. In one case, a teen who came home in the back seat of a squad car explained to his parents that he had done so well in school that he had won a special honor, a police escort. Another teen got $10



from her parents for getting two As. When the mother proudly showed Pothan the report card, however, Mom was startled to learn that the As were for gym and art classes; in fact, her daughter was failing primary academic subjects. And there's a cultural divide on other issues, such as the Western dating scene and the American school system.

To help Cambodian families adjust, the project requires parenting classes for participants' parents. Classes cover social and cultural issues, with guidance from a curriculum designed for adults who don't read or write. "Most of these parents have never gone to school," Pothan explains. "They have to memorize everything because they can't take notes."

MEETING GIRLS' SPECIAL NEEDS

Another surprising trend surfaced when project designers pored through statistical records: Girls' involvement in crime and gangs was spiraling upward. Girl gangsters traditionally have belonged to "girlfriend" groups—female counterparts to existing male gangs. But something new had emerged: independent all-girl gangs.

To meet the special needs of girls who are teetering on gang involvement or living in high-risk, case-managed families, the Cambodian Girls' Group was formed. Girls' families get services, too.

Help begins with job opportunities and training. Because many of these girls have trouble finding employment, the Cambodian Girls' Group provides paid internships to help the girls learn marketable skills. They get retail experience at 10,000 Villages, an arts-and-crafts shop that donates profits to charity. They learn child-care skills at the Southwest Youth and Family Center. They also learn skills as teacher's aides and clerical workers, earning a small stipend each month—money that often supplements the family's income.

Girls must attend tutoring sessions three evenings a week. Whenever possible, group leaders are Cambodian. This can be a challenge, Pothan admits. U.S. Census data report that only 35 percent of Cambodians have a high school diploma, and only 4 percent have made it through a four-year college.

NIPPING PROBLEMS IN THE BUD

The project's banner program, a youth center, offers kids a detour from the path to trouble: a safe place to hang out.

"The kind of kids we see here are typically juvenile-justice involved," says center coordinator Steve Hamai. "They have an arrest record; they're dropping out of school. They're gang involved, drug involved, on the fringe. They're not succeeding in school or in the mainstream, and they don't have much community attachment. So the center is essentially trying to create that for them—a sense of community, a place they can call home."

Serving Cambodian and Vietnamese kids 12 to 21 years old, the SafeFutures Youth Center provides case management, counseling, and community organizing. Bilingual staff accompany youth and parents to court hearings and probation meetings. They intervene in school matters, checking out grades and attendance records and talking to teachers, counselors, and school administrators about behavioral problems. They tap into services to help kids, whether it's drug treatment, mental health services, or health care they need. In short, they do whatever it takes.

"Very rarely will you hear any staff person here directly tell a kid, 'You've got to get out of the gang,' because those kind of discussions are pretty fruitless—telling the kid what to do when he's had enough of that," Hamai says. "What we really try to do here is foster a new version of family for them. This is a second home for a lot of these kids, so what we tell them is, 'This is your extended family and all the staff here play a role in that family

—almost like an aunt or uncle, an older brother or older sister, or a grandparent.' That kind of care, I think, is real important—to be a substitute for the gang life that they could easily lead."

For a lot of kids, gangs provide a sort of family structure, a place to fit in. The youth center tries to create a positive alternative to gang life, filling the need for family and belonging. The center's doors are always open, even to kids who slip.

"That means a kid can get rearrested, go to a drug treatment center or whatever—they can bottom out and still come back," Hamai says. "We're always going to be here. We want to be the constant in their life."

Still, there are house rules. Says Hamai: "We realize we can't control their behavior out on the street, but we do ask them to control their behavior when they're here." Most of the day, the kids are free to hang out. But at four o'clock, it's time for "business." Each afternoon for two hours, University of Washington students tutor youths in small groups or one-on-one. Anybody who's not serious about getting help has to leave. Later, they can come back and participate in structured activities like basketball.

One of the kids at the center these days is 16-year-old Veasna. In many ways a typical teen, he wears baggy jeans and T-shirts and sports a clean-cut, Leonardo di Caprio haircut. He likes to play sports, eat pizza, and hang out with friends. In fact, with his gregarious personality and devilish grin, Veasna seems like a kid who would have no trouble rounding up votes for student council president. However, the friends he chose to hang with a few years back wore self-inscribed tattoos instead of letter jackets—tattoos of gang insignia and street names.

Veasna was following in the steps of his older brother, Heang, a gang member with tattoos covering his chest, back, and hands. Before long, Veasna was "in," his grades were plummeting, and he was involved in petty crime. Ironically, when he was finally expelled from school, it wasn't because of his gang activities. Rather, he tried to break up a fight between two classmates and got caught with his fist in motion when school staff arrived on the scene.

As it turns out, this expulsion may have been a blessing in disguise. The event landed him, not in detention, but at the SafeFutures Youth Center, where he's made a remarkable turnaround. He's no longer sporting gang colors, and his grades have risen from a GPA of 1.0 to 2.8. At Hamai's encouragement, he is a community representative on a teen leadership council that strives to smooth relations between ethnic groups and develop the community's assets.

But that's not the end of Veasna's story. It took a twist nobody expected. As Veasna began spending more time at the youth center, his older brother Heang gave his little bro' a lift one night and stopped inside just to have a look. Over time, his visits lasted longer. At last, he no longer needed the excuse of a little brother.

Going through a kind of midlife crisis at the street-weary age of 21, Heang had been giving more thought to the life he'd chosen. He had a newborn son and, like people from all walks of life, wanted something better for his child.

With the help of youth center staff, he found a job. And he's considering getting his gang tattoos removed so his son will never have to ask what they mean.

To Seattle Police Sergeant Dianne Newsom, stories like this are all too rare. An eight-year veteran of the gang unit, it's her job to patrol the streets, meet the gangsters, get her fingers on the pulse. If a fight's going down, she wants to know about it so she and her unit can get there first.

While they disdain regular police officers, gang members have a certain respect for the gang-unit detectives. A number of the gangsters talk to her. It's easy to see why. She's tough and tells it like it is. But there's an underlying earth-mother quality about her that makes kids comfortable. The gangsters, who all have nicknames, have given her one too: Dragon Lady.

"Some of these kids really want to change, but don't have the self-confidence to do it yet—or the self-respect," the Dragon Lady says. "We give them an excuse not to go somewhere if they don't want to. I give them my card and tell them to call me."

Newsom will do whatever she can to help a kid get off the streets. It's this commitment that led to her involvement in SafeFutures collaborative efforts, where she serves as a liaison between service providers and gang-involved kids. Newsom thinks she's seen the biggest need for a lot of kids—someone to say "no."

"Kids test limits. They have to," she says. "It's part of growing up." When parents are there to guide them, kids learn to choose better and anticipate consequences. "But when these kids test and push limits, no one's there."

According to Newsom, the judicial system could use some tweaking, too. "When a child does something wrong, they need to be punished right away—time-out, whatever—so that they can connect the punishment to the crime." Under the current system in Washington state, juveniles accumulate points for each crime. Punishment comes only after a certain number of points build up. The crime that pushes a kid over the top may be far less serious, ironically, than the original crime, for which he was not punished directly.

"They've forgotten about everything else—what else got them there—because they weren't punished the first time," Newsom explains.

She supports an alternative called At-Risk Youth Petitions. Filed by the parents or guardians of an out-of-control child who's not yet involved in the court system, the petition spells out expectations for the child: attending school, meeting with a counselor, making a curfew. Because it's a legal agreement approved by a judge, it's binding. If the child fails to stick to the agreement, he or she goes to detention. Dealing with problems early can prevent a more serious offense down the road.

In one case, a girl stood up and asked the judge, "Why should I be home at 11 o'clock, doing my homework, when my mother never comes home?" The judge said, "Really?" The judge added a clause to the

BIG SISTER MAKES BIG DIFFERENCE

SEATTLE—At 3 p.m., a dozen yellow cabs queue up in front of T.T. Minor Elementary School. Kids scramble to climb in as drivers wait. You might expect kids who get exclusive, door-to-door transportation to be among the city's elite. Not so. These kids, many of them recent immigrants, are some of the poorest. Their homes are the tenements and shelters of the central city. Many move often from place to place, school to school, as their families struggle to get by. Keeping these kids anchored to a single school is a district commitment here. Even if it means forking over a few taxi fares.

"A lot of these kids have been exposed to domestic violence and they're shuffled around, living with an aunt or uncle or foster parent—maybe living in a shelter," says Terry Schuler, coordinator of a Big Sisters mentoring program funded by SafeFutures. "School may be the only consistent thing in their life."

Through her work in area schools, Schuler tries to tip the asset scale a bit further in kids' favor. When teachers or counselors see a little girl they think could benefit from exposure to a positive role model, they give Schuler a call. "Usually," Schuler says, "it's a girl with great potential. There's just something in her life that's hindering it."

Schuler interviews volunteer mentors to find just the right match. That's how Nina Beach met Tonyckau (say ton-EE-ka).

A successful African American woman, Beach felt a responsibility to give something back to her community. Two years ago, she began mentoring seven-year-old Tonyckau when it looked like the first-grader might not be promoted to second grade.

Recalls Beach: "Her parents were separated. Her mom was into drugs. Tonyckau was caring for her one-year-old sister and cleaning the house."

Once a week, Beach tutored her "little sister." They played games. They laughed and talked. Things were going well. Then Tonyckau's mother landed in jail. The girl was sent to her grandmother's. It wasn't long before old patterns returned. Tonyckau stopped doing her homework and started acting out in class.

"The weird thing was," says Beach, "while she was living with her grandmother, her hair was always combed and she always had decent clothes on. Yet all she could think about was how she wanted to be with her mother. She loved her mother who didn't comb her hair, who didn't care if she had any clothes to wear or food to eat."

There was one important ground rule Beach and Tonyckau had made at the start of their relationship: no playtime until schoolwork is done. The little girl began to balk at the rule. One day, she started to cry and said she never got to do anything fun. But Beach held the line. "I said, 'Tonyckau, your homework is more important. We can't do anything fun unless you finish your homework.'" Then, she left.

The next week, Tonyckau's homework was done. What's more, her teacher reported that she had behaved well in class. All because she valued her relationship with Beach.

"I gave her a big hug," says Beach, "and told her we could do anything she wanted since her homework was done." Tonyckau chose to read to Beach for the next hour.

Schuler points out the significance of this. "A lot of these kids have trouble reading," she says. "In the first months of mentoring, the kids want you to think that they're the smartest person in the whole wide world. They don't want to read to you because they don't want to show you that they can't do that. They'll tell you the most incredible stories: 'Terry, did you know that Michael's sister said that her father's buying her a horse?' when the family they're talking about is living in a shelter."

Mentors need to let their young friends know they like and accept them for who they are, Schuler says. It's the relationship, more than the tutoring, that's the critical component for success.

"Research tells us," Schuler says, "that if you have more assets in your life, even one or two, you're more likely to succeed."

petition, requiring the mother to be home at 11 o'clock on weeknights. Newsom laughs. "You can't ask somebody to change if you don't set an example," she observes.

Newsom sets her own example in schools throughout Seattle. A road show on gun violence, Options, Choices, and Consequences, lays out the uncut realities of using firearms. Joining her on the stage is a physician who shares pictures of gunshot victims, so that kids can see how TV differs from real-life violence. Also in the cast is a prosecutor who talks about the law. He tells kids, for instance, that even packing a toy gun will get you thrown out of school.

Newsom tells students what will happen if they're involved in a shooting: "You're going to end up in handcuffs. You're going to end up in the back seat of the car. We're going to call your parents. If you're 16 or over, we can send you right to adult court. If it's an automatic, you *will* be tried as an adult." She explains that adult jail is nothing like the juvenile detention center.

"You know what? The big, bad guys? They're not at all impressed that you're a 16-year-old kid with a gun. They don't care. There, you're small potatoes."

Recently, Newsom brought a former client into her act.

"I always liked him," she says. "But he made me angry because he kept doing dumb stuff. Each time, he'd say, 'This is it, Dianne. I'm going to change.' And I kept saying, 'Good. Do it. Stop hanging there. You're too smart. Make something of yourself.'"

She was there when one of his friends was dying. He said he would get out. She was there when he shot at a police officer. He promised he would stop.

"And then," she says, "he ends up killing somebody."

In prison, Newsom's friend had a religious conversion. Devoting his life to turning others from his path, he tells Seattle students he didn't hear Newsom's message in time.

"She talked to me. She told me I should stop," he says, "but I wasn't ready to hear it." A couple of heads in the audience nod. "But I'm telling you now, you need to hear it sooner than I heard it. Because I went to prison."

Finally, Newsom tells the students what it was like for her to watch two gunshot victims—a seven-year-old caught in crossfire and a 13-year-old killed for her jacket—die in her arms. She asks if they can imagine what that would be like. She asks if they can imagine taking that kind of news to a parent. To *their* parents.

She doesn't know if she's made an impact. In many cases, she knows she hasn't. "There's that mentality, from 12 to 16, that they're invincible—that it won't happen to them."

But, of course, it does. And sometimes, it gets to her.

"There's times when," Newsom says, losing her brass for the first time, "especially the ones you watched grow up, you wonder where you lost them. I mean, some of these hard-core gangsters—when you sit there and talk to them one-on-one, away from the group— some of them are really nice. And you just wonder what circumstances could have changed earlier in their life that didn't.

"Sometimes," she says, "you just cry." ■

Peace Is the Road

Continued from Page 56

this journey. Last year, more than 70 percent of our third-graders met or exceeded the standard in both reading and math. As these students move through our school, we will be watching to see if these results carry over to fifth grade.

The key elements to our success, I believe, are time and consistency. Schools do not become successful overnight. One of my beliefs is captured in a quote from the great peacemaker Mahatma Gandhi: "There is no road to peace. Peace is the road."

Anita Harder brings more than 30 years of education experience to her post as Principal of Glenfair Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. She has attended a number of training programs in peaceable education practices, including Harvard Principals' Center training on conflict resolution, led by Educators for Social Responsibility; and Leading the Cooperative School, led by Roger Johnson and David Johnson, codirectors of the Cooperative Learning Center, University of Minnesota. ■

EARLY BIRDS

Continued from Page 19

just walk into the school. He was hysterical," says Mike Patterson. Once in class Jacob was uncooperative, inattentive, and disruptive, says Newton.

With First Step, Jacob changed. "He went from hysterical, clinging to you, you can't walk out of the school, to walking into the school by himself, confident, dealing with peers," says Mike Patterson. Now in first grade, Jacob likes school and is excited about doing homework, which he routinely completes on Monday though it isn't due until Thursday.

To a casual observer in Turner's class at Chapman, another First Step boy named Winston is indistinguishable from his peers by the 10th day of the program. Just as the class is lining up to go to the library, the prompter goes off. In the hubbub, Turner scans the crowd at the door, looking for Winston so she can check his behavior. He's not easy to spot because he's standing serenely, hands behind his back. "This used to be one of his most difficult times—the transition, getting in line, going somewhere," says Newton, who is visiting to check Winston's progress. "Right now he would have been all over, poking and screaming and making funny noises. Before we couldn't get him in line at all. He would sit there and say, 'No, I'm not going.'"

She catches his eye above the crowd and mouths, "You're doing a good job, Winston."

RESOURCE NOTE: *A $145 kit contains everything needed for implementing First Step with three children and their families. Although the kit can stand alone, training is suggested. Implementing the program takes about 40 to 45 hours per child over a three-month period. A district may be able to use existing staff—such as a child development specialist, school social worker, or special education teacher—in the consultant's role. For more information about the program, training, hiring a consultant, and costs, call Annemieke Golly at (541) 346-3582 or the program publisher, Sopris West, at 1-800-547-6747.* ■

NEW ATTITUDE

Continued from Page 39

pull from a range of topics that emphasize self-esteem and personal power, empathy, praising self and others, dealing with peer pressure, and understanding and handling anger and stress.

Last year the girls were paired with individual mentors at least once a week, but Aiken—like many educators—has found it difficult to carry over the mentoring relationships from one academic year to the next. Still, the girls reap many of the benefits of more traditional mentoring relationships from the regular contact and support of the adults who staff the program.

The key to effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers of different ages, says researcher Cynthia Sipe in *Mentoring: A Synthesis of P/PV's Research, 1988-1995* (published by Public/Private Ventures in 1996). One of the most encouraging aspects of the study for schools interested in developing mentoring programs is that the mentors involved were not trained in drug prevention, remedial tutoring, antiviolence counseling, or family therapy, yet by providing friendship and support, they helped steer mentees away from drugs, fighting, and skipping school.

For kids, this means that even when the Kelli Aikens and Tomas Sepulvedas of the world aren't around, the lessons and social skills they have instilled in them are still going strong.

RESOURCE NOTE: *Two free Education Department publications offer more information on after-school programs.* Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids *outlines the benefits of after-school programs, details components of high-quality programs, and provides descriptions of several exemplary programs.* Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers: Extending Learning in a Safe, Drug-Free Environment Before and After School *provides a wealth of resources for schools interested in starting extended-hour programs, including the steps required to convert a school into a Community Learning Center, budgeting guidelines and estimates of typical program costs, ideas for financing a program, and tips for evaluating a program's effectiveness. Both publications are available on the department's Web site (http://www.ed.gov/pubs) or by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.* ■

Peace Is The Road

BY ANITA HARDER

Each morning over the school intercom, two students remind the Glenfair community of learners to:
"Take care of yourself,
Take care of each other,
Take care of this place
where everybody teaches and
everybody learns."

It's the "everybody" that's unique about these school rules. Over nearly a decade, students and staff have learned together how to form a peaceful place for all those who enter.

Eight years ago, when I took the principal's post at Glenfair Elementary School in the Reynolds School District, I brought two key staff members from my previous school, Alder Elementary. Together, this counselor, teacher, and I had led Alder in training all 600 students in resolving conflicts using the Law Related Education curriculum, which features conflict resolution as a key prong. This effort earned us the School of the Year Award from Oregon Law Related Education.

Parents at Glenfair, desiring a more peaceful place for their children to learn and play, asked us to bring conflict resolution to their school, too.

We knew that all students need these skills. So our first task was to teach all the fourth- and fifth-graders about conflict and how to mediate for each other. We sent out student "peacekeepers" to help their younger peers during the primary recess. Our next task was to train the primary students in problem solving.

We set out then to create a climate free of threat. Susan Kovalik of Kent, Washington, who trained us in her concept of "brain-compatible teaching," stresses the idea that if children are in a threatening environment, their brains are in survival mode. Thinking at a higher level is shut down. Kids can't learn. So the first thing schools need to do is make kids feel safe.

To create that safe environment, we taught students a set of 15 "life skills" (such as integrity, initiative, flexibility, and humor) and five "lifelong guidelines" (such as truthfulness and active listening) identified by Kovalik. Conflicts or mistakes arise, she says, when people fail to use these fundamental tenets.

The staff identified other practices that would become consistent throughout the school. We agreed on a three-step problem-solving model (derived from Blueprints for Thinking in a Cooperative Classroom) for daily class meetings. At the class meeting—which would start and end with complimenting one another—students could bring up problems for discussion, using two questions and a choice to steer the talk:

1. What do you think the problem is?
2. What do you think you should do?
3. Choose a solution.

As students began to ponder solutions, we realized they needed a set of consistent ideas to draw upon. We settled on a tool called the Kelso Wheel, a mandala that offers nine options for dealing with conflict (take turns, apologize, tell them to stop, ignore it, and so on). Published by Rhinestone Press in Kelso, Oregon, the wheel was introduced to Glenfair kids beginning in kindergarten.

At a staff retreat, we decided to add a weekly all-school meeting where students could see the entire school modeling compliments and using Kovalik's life skills. Each Wednesday morning, everyone gathers in the gym. We start with birthday recognition and announcements about events. Then a student from each classroom gives a compliment to someone in the school and names the life skill that person exhibits.

The research is very clear on the importance of modeling. So the entire staff agreed to "walk our talk." We needed to become adult role models for resolving problems using peaceful alternatives. In our newsletter, we shared with parents the direction we were headed and asked for their support. We held "family nights" to inform parents about all the learning we were putting into practice.

Training in Blueprints for Thinking in a Cooperative Classroom (Skylights Publishing, Palatine, Illinois) helped us recognize the group process at work in our school and in our classrooms. We learned that groups typically go through a team-building process in which they *form, norm, conform,* and *storm* before they can *perform*. "Storming" is a questioning phase, when personalities can tug and pull against each other. It can rip the group apart if members don't have good conflict-resolution practices in place. As we pay attention to this process and give students ways to recognize "storming" in their school and in their lives, we are seeing our school feel and perform in more peaceful ways.

Kids are taking their new skills home with them. One mom was taken aback when her fifth-grade son offered to mediate an argument between his parents. When a family conflict arose in another home, a child said to her mother, "Let's look for a solution on the Kelso wheel hanging on the fridge."

Even more exciting, our state test scores have risen each year of

See PEACE IS THE ROAD, Page 54

NW

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Fall issue
Schoolwide Reform: Changing Schools from the Ground Up

Winter issue
Urban Education, Northwest-style

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DEPARTMENTS:

ON THE COVER: "KING MASK" BY PAIGE PRENDERGAST, STUDENT IN DOMINIQUE SARAFIAN'S SCULPTURE AND COLLAGE CLASS AT THE NORTHWEST ACADEMY, PORTLAND. MULTICULTURAL UNIT ON MASKS INCLUDED ART HISTORY, WRITTEN CRITIQUES, EXPLORATIONS OF MEDIA, AND MASK MAKING.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC GRISWOLD

HIS ISSUE

Turning Points

Standing on the stage of Portland's Schnitzer Concert Hall a few months back, Academy Award-winning filmmaker Barbara Kopple told a rapt audience about the unlikely dawning of her career. It began when she was enrolled in a psychology class that required field work and a report. For her research, she visited mental patients who had undergone lobotomies. Words seemed inadequate when she tried to describe the emotional suffering she had witnessed in the faces of the patients and their families. So, instead of a written report, she made "a little movie" about her research.

Was she rewarded for her creative approach? Hardly. Kopple's professor was livid. He told her she had taken "the easy way out." He gave her a "D."

But for Kopple, the die was cast. Instead of becoming a psychologist, she became a visual storyteller, artfully weaving words and images into gripping documentaries. Instinctively, she pursued what Harvard researcher Howard Gardner would call "a different way of knowing," and she has never looked back.

When artists, musicians, filmmakers, and other creative folks talk about their lives, they often describe similar turning points. Sometimes, like Kopple, they gravitate to the arts in spite of their formal schooling. But others speak fondly of a teacher who offered encouragement or instruction at a key moment, opening their eyes to the lessons only the arts can teach.

A music teacher I know, for instance, tells the story of a high school student who was caught vandalizing school property. The teacher was invited into the principal's office to help determine the boy's punishment. He asked the surly teen why he'd shattered his classroom window. At first the boy only glared, but finally he confessed, "I wanted to get in, to play the piano." The wise teacher made him pay for the broken pane—but also "sentenced" him to enroll in a music class. The former vandal is now a professional jazz performer and musical arranger.

Across the country, the arts are gaining support from unexpected quarters because of their unique power to shape young minds. Education reformers and back-to-basics proponents are citing research that shows the arts can uplift school performance, creating more engaged learners and improving the atmosphere of the schoolhouse. This is good news for the arts, but it's even better news for America's students. Not all of them will grow up to be musicians or filmmakers or painters, of course. But each one can gain from a learning environment that touches and teaches all the senses.

This issue of *Northwest Education* examines the research about the benefits of studying and performing the arts, and highlights the findings of several national studies that support the arts as essential to education. Then, we take you on a barnstorming tour of the region to showcase schools and individual classrooms where creativity is becoming a basic part of the lesson plan.

In some communities, we admit, it's hardly a time to celebrate the arts. Tight budgets have forced many school districts to scale back their arts programming, just when the educational benefits are being reinforced by research. If you've found a way to make the arts thrive in your school, perhaps you'll share your creative approach in a letter to the editor. We welcome your ideas—especially if they seem a little "different."

—*Suzie Boss*
bosss@nwrel.org

APPLAUDING THE ARTS

"The arts ... are fundamental to what it means to be an educated person. To lack an education in the arts is to be profoundly disconnected from our history, from beauty, from other cultures, and from other forms of expression."

—The Arts and Education: Partners in Achieving Our National Education Goals

What a difference a decade makes.

In 1988, *Toward Civilization*, a report by the National Endowment for the Arts, warns that the arts are in "triple jeopardy" in American schools: "They are not viewed as serious; knowledge itself is not viewed as a prime educational objective; and those who determine school curricula do not agree on what arts education is."

In 1998, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton hosts a White House special event, Recognizing the Power of the Arts in Education, and the national *Arts Report Card* is published, asserting: "As a means of encountering the world around us, the arts offer a unique combination of intellectual, emotional, imaginative, and physical experiences. The arts as a means of expression are especially important in the context of current educational reform."

Local school districts that spent the 1980s dismantling or downsizing their arts programs in favor of more "rigorous" academic programming may be amazed to hear the arts applauded as a key to school reform. Yet as we head into the next century, business leaders, school reformers, researchers, and policymakers are joining in chorus to sing the praises of the arts. Far from being portrayed as an expensive frill, an education in the arts is increasingly viewed as essential to the curriculum—valued for its own sake, as a means of enhancing learning in other areas, and as a tool to develop future workplace skills.

Arts advocates have always known that students who engage in visual and performing arts benefit in profound, lasting ways. Long after the paint dries, the strings grow still, or the stage lights dim, students who experience the arts firsthand carry within them lessons about the joy of creativity, the pursuit of excellence, and the cultural heritage we all share as humans. But to explain the latest surge of interest in the arts as a force to uplift education, it's worth looking at the "harder" evidence that's been making its way into the popular press, academic journals, and a recent flurry of national reports. A few highlights:

- In 1995 College Board testing, students who have studied the arts for at least four years score 59 points higher on the verbal portion of the SAT, and 44 points higher on math, than students with no experience or coursework in the arts
- According to a 1997 report from the Department of Education, "Children naturally sing, dance, draw, and role-play in an effort to understand the world around them and communicate their thoughts about it. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that when their caretakers engage them in these activities early in life on a regular basis, they are helping to wire the children's brains for successful learning."
- In studies at University of California at Irvine, IQ scores go up among college students who listen to classical recordings immediately before testing—a phenomenon nicknamed "The Mozart Effect"
- Arts education programs are related to safer and more orderly school environments (*Safe Havens*)
- Schools with strong arts programs report better attendance, increased graduation rates, improved multicultural understanding, greater community support, invigorated faculty, and the development of higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving ability among students (*The Power of the Arts to Transform Education*)
- The arts serve students with special needs, including those who are in danger of falling through the cracks of the educational system (*American Canvas*), and allow success "for people who have been defined as failures" (*Art Works!*)

How did we get here?

The arts have never existed in a vacuum. The capacity of a cave painting, a folk song, or a public sculpture to reflect the context of the times is what gives art lasting cultural value.

In education, the arts have come in and out of vogue during different eras, reflecting shifts in values and philosophies. In the early 19th century, common schools used music to teach basic skills and transmit values deemed important to a democratic society. With the arrival of the Industrial Age, arts education came to be seen in a new way—as helpful to producing skilled workers. Drafting classes and drawing exercises were added to the curriculum as a way of keeping American industry competitive. By the late 19th century, the fine arts were considered "a frill, suited for an elite," according to Harvard's Howard Gardner, whose pioneering research on multiple intelligences has helped shape current thinking about the role of the arts in education.

The new century brought another paradigm shift. John Dewey and other Progressives embraced the arts as outlets for creativity and play, which would naturally foster child development. According to Gardner, the curriculum shifted again to accommodate this view of the child-as-artist. "Those works that were deemed 'expressive,' 'creative,' or 'powerful' came to be cherished more than those that were 'merely' technically competent," he reports in *Evaluating and Assessing the Visual Arts in Education*.

Most adults educated during the first half of this century had some exposure to music and visual arts, although seldom in a comprehensive way. In *Learning in and through Art: A Guide to Discipline-Based Art Education*, Stephen Mark Dobbs relates, the art lesson used to be "relief from the pressure of the academic curriculum. It was 'tenderhearted' rather than 'hardheaded,' dealing with emotions and affect, which was considered extraneous to the real purposes of schooling. Art appeared to give students the opportunity to relax and not have to use their minds."

Sputnik launched another turning point. The Space

Race pushed science and math to the top of the academic pecking order. When school boards looked for extras to sacrifice for the sake of beefing up more rigorous programs, Gardner says, "the arts were among the first to go."

More recent decades have seen a "hit-and-run approach" to teaching the arts, according to Richard Deasy of the Arts Education Partnership. Rather than a national consensus, local circumstances and the passions of individual teachers have dictated how much, and what kind, of arts education students receive.

When the 1980s brought another push for school improvement, the arts were initially overlooked. The landmark *A Nation at Risk* study, released in 1983, made no mention of the arts. In 1989, then-President Bush and governors of all 50 states agreed on National Education Goals, which called for students to demonstrate competency in "challenging subject matter," namely, math, science, reading, writing, and geography. Again, the arts were ignored.

But by the early 1990s, the pendulum was poised to swing again. A strong push came from the arts and education communities, from business leaders concerned about having creative problem solvers for the Information Age, and from researchers with new insights into how children learn. This time, however, the goal was not to bring the arts back into vogue for the short term, but to create a permanent place for arts education within the basic curriculum. With the passage of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* in 1994, new national goals were written into law, naming the arts as a core academic subject—as important as English, mathematics, history, civics and government, geography, science, and foreign language. The *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994* states: "Congress finds that the arts are forms of understanding and ways of knowing that are fundamentally important to education."

Ways of knowing *what?*

Arts education is best defined broadly, according to the National Coalition for Education in the Arts. This consortium of 28 national arts organizations came together earlier this decade to draw up national standards for what young Americans should know and be able to do in the arts. According to the coalition, a solid grounding in the arts teaches students to be both actor and audience, creator and critic. An arts education is "the process of teaching and learning how to create and produce the visual and performing arts and how to understand and evaluate art forms created by others."

The voluntary National Standards for Arts Education, adopted in 1994, don't spell out how results should be achieved (let alone how arts programs should be funded). Rather than laying out a curriculum, the standards provide broad educational goals intended to engage students in the processes of creating, performing, and responding. They also call for comprehensive learning, with students building on a base of knowledge and participating in increasingly rigorous work as they progress through the grades. By the time students have completed high school, according to the standards, they should be able to:

- Communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines—dance, music, theater, and the visual arts
- Communicate proficiently in at least one art form
- Develop and present basic analyses of works of art
- Have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods
- Relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines

Such broad definition allows plenty of room for local interpretation. The paintings and plays and dances selected for classroom study can be the work of world-renowned master artists or reflect the local

Can you explain the use of perspective in a Renaissance painting? Create a rhythmic embellishment for the first bars of "Ode to Joy"? Describe how an actor's voice conveys emotion?

For many of the nation's eighth-graders, these are challenging tasks for which they've been poorly prepared, according to a major national arts assessment released in November.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, focusing on arts education for the first time in two decades, issued an *Arts Report Card* that Education Secretary Richard Riley called "disappointing." He told *Education Daily*: "The neglect of arts education is simply inexcusable."

More than 6,660 eighth-graders in 268 of the nation's schools were assessed on their abilities to create, perform, and respond to the disciplines of visual arts, music, and theater. Not enough schools offered dance classes to generate a sufficient sample for testing.

The report noted some bright spots, such as the findings that "most eighth-graders were able to distinguish [musical] phrases as being the same or different," and that "students were able to accurately describe some aspects of artwork." Many students lacked basic art literacy skills, however. Only 32 percent could label the notes of a C major scale, and only 1 percent created collages that showed awareness of color, texture, and contrast. Girls consistently outperformed boys in the assessment.

In addition to assessing students' skills in carefully planned exercises, the NAEP also took stock of the arts resources currently available in the nation's schools. Most students, according to the *Arts Report Card*, attended schools in which instruction following district or state curricula was offered in music and visual arts, but not in theater or dance. Seventy-five percent of students attended schools with full-time music teachers, for instance, compared to 1 percent with full-time dance teachers. While most schools said they offered music and art classes, however, less than half of the students surveyed said they were taking them.

Copies of the *NAEP 1997 Arts Report Card* are free from the National Center for Education Statistics (1-877-4-ED-PUBS), or available online at www.ed.gov/NCES/naep.

context of place and community. An appropriate art lesson might involve the wooden carvings of the Tlingit people of Alaska, the folk music of rural Montana, the symphonies of Beethoven, or the vibrant paintings of Seattle's Jacob Lawrence. More important than specific content is an approach to learning that is systematic, rigorous, and allows students to construct meaning for themselves.

Following the national lead, most states are developing content guidelines for the arts and a handful are establishing pilot programs to integrate the arts into the curriculum. The trend is clear: In 1980, only two states required some study of the arts for high school graduation. By last year, 32 states had arts requirements, according to the National Arts Education Association.

In the Northwest, Washington spent two years developing Essential Academic Learning Requirements in the arts as part of school-reform efforts. Benchmarks adopted in 1997 describe what students should be expected to achieve at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Next, legislators are expected to consider whether to add arts achievement tests. In Montana, a federally funded program to encourage innovation in education led to the Framework for Aesthetic Literacy, which has shaped the curriculum in 10 pilot schools that weave the arts across the curriculum. Oregon school reform efforts call for students to meet state content standards of knowledge in the arts by the 2001-02 school year, with local districts responsible for establishing performance standards. As part of its statewide educational reform effort, Alaska also has developed content standards for the arts, including dance, drama, music, and the literary and visual arts. An arts framework has been adopted to assist in curriculum development at the local level. Idaho developed a framework document for the arts in the mid-1990s, and requires two units (one full year of study) in the humanities for high school graduation. Students can fulfill the requirement by taking courses in the visual or performing arts.

The Fourth R

Watching a polished young pianist coax a melody from the keys, the audience witnesses a marvelous interplay of learned skills and personal expression. Less visible—but of special significance to educators—is the symbol system behind the song. That's the key to what makes the visual and performing arts worth studying for all students, not only those few bound for concert stages.

Eloquent Evidence, a 1995 publication by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, asserts: "The arts convey knowledge and meaning not learned through the study of other subjects .... Like language or mathematics, the arts involve the use of complex symbols to communicate. To attain competence in the arts, it is necessary to gain literacy with these symbol systems .... Arts teachers daily ask their students to engage in learning activities which require use of higher-order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Arts education, then, is first of all an activity of the mind."

The avenues for learning and thinking that the arts open up are so significant that some educators and researchers have begun referring to the arts as "the fourth R." In *How the Arts Contribute to Education*, a 1996 research review commissioned by the Association for the Advancement of Arts Education, author Kent Seidel concludes that studying the arts develops students' minds and bodies in ways that enable them to learn better; teaches learning methods and habits of mind (such as creativity, critical thinking, self-discipline) that foster success; and teaches ways to connect and communicate with others.

Elliot Eisner, Professor of Art and Education at Stanford University and author of *The Enlightened Eye*, suggests four broad outcomes of an arts education—outcomes that cannot be achieved except by creating and responding to art:

- Students acquire a feel for what it means to transform their ideas, images, and feelings into an art form
- Students learn to use an aesthetic frame of reference to see and hear—to know not only *what* they like or respond to in a work, but *why*
- Students understand that there is a connection between the content and form that the arts display and the culture and time in which the work was created
- Students gain a willingness to imagine possibilities, to explore ambiguity

As good classroom teachers have long known, and researchers have thoroughly documented, students take many routes to learning. They are not all "intelligent" in the same way. By including arts in the basic curriculum—either as a stand-alone discipline, or integrated into the study of other subjects—teachers cast a wider net, drawing in students whose individual learning styles may differ widely.

Gardner, in his 1983 book, *Frames of Mind*, identified seven "ways of knowing" to explain his theory of multiple intelligences. Most schools have traditionally favored two: ***linguistic intelligence***, of value in reading and writing; and ***logico-mathematical intelligence***, central for mathematical, scientific, and technological studies. Gardner suggests at least five more ways in which humans can develop their potential: ***musical intelligence***, exhibited by performers and composers; ***spatial intelligence***, important to airplane pilots, sculptors, or others who rely on their ability to perceive visually and manipulate spatially; ***bodily-kinesthetic intelligence***, which a dancer or a football player uses to solve problems with the whole body; ***interpersonal intelligence***, which involves knowing and working with others; ***intrapersonal intelligence***, which focuses inward, to an understanding of the self. The arts offer students opportunities to develop their intelligence along multiple, sometimes overlapping, pathways. According to *The Power of the Arts to Transform Education*, "The arts help schools address the total mind and cultivate the full range of human potential."

The Getty Education Institute for the Arts, in *Educating for the Workplace through the Arts*, applauds this capacity of the arts to "set many hooks" to capture student attention, appealing to many levels of experience at the same time. Indeed, a curriculum that favors only one "way of knowing" may set some students up for failure. Gerald Grow of Florida A&M University, argues in a journal article ("The Writing Problems of Visual Thinkers," *Visible Language*, spring 1994) that schools have a "verbal bias" which works against more visually oriented students. "Certain writing problems result from a strength misapplied," he asserts.

The "ways of knowing" that the arts nurture are also earning respect in the workplace. According to the *Arts and Education* national report, "The arts teach and enhance such skills as the ability to manage resources, the interpersonal skills of cooperation and teamwork, the ability to acquire and use information and to master different types of symbol systems, and the skills required to use a variety of technologies." These are the same cognitive, interpersonal, and strategic skills called for in the Department of Labor's Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) to prepare for the 21st century.

Classroom Challenges

While expanding on arts education may make great sense from a theoretical point of view, it raises a number of thorny issues in the classroom. Who should teach art lessons: classroom teachers or arts specialists? How often? Are the arts best taught alone, for their own sake, or integrated into the study of other subjects? For classroom teachers already running double time to fit in the demands of the curriculum, how can they hope to make time for arts? And what if you're a teacher with no arts background? From an administrator's or school board's perspective, where's the time and money for art supplies, musical instruments, dance studios, and staff development going to come from?

Judging by the *Arts Report Card* released last year, these questions remain unanswered in many communities, with a solid education in the visual and performing arts still more an ideal than a reality for most young Americans (see sidebar, Page 7).

Funding for arts specialists remains scarce in many states, including those in the Northwest. Yet, as Gardner points out: "Learning in the arts cannot be counted on to take care of itself. The symbol systems of the arts need to be learned just as surely as the symbol systems of history, mathematics, or science."

Transforming the arts from elective to essential will take time and money, experts agree. According to the National Standards for Arts Education: "Teachers, of course, will be the leaders in this process [of transforming education through arts] …. More teachers with credentials in the arts, as well as better-trained teachers in general, will be needed." Some states, such as California, are developing summer institutes to expand teachers' depth of understanding in the arts. Pilot programs, such as the arts-infused Academics + Arts Schools operating in several southeastern states, conduct summer training sessions for teachers and additional staff development workshops throughout the year. Project Zero at Harvard puts educational theories developed by Gardner and others into practice at local school sites.

At the most basic level, however, embracing the arts in the classroom is more about a change in philosophy than an investment in equipment, training, or supplies. The Blue Ribbon Schools program of the U.S. Department of Education, which recognizes excellence in arts education, calls for "teaching strategies that are robustly active. Teachers of the arts are continually asking students to move, shape, do."

In *Transforming Ideas for Teaching and Learning the Arts*, a 1997 publication of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, author Charles L. Gray points out, "Arts programs provide opportunities for students to pose questions, analyze evidence, consider hypotheses, and defend a point of view." In the classroom, this means using teaching strategies "that will allow students to discover their talents and creativity on their own … selecting adjectives that help define an object in terms of its looks, smell, sound, taste, and touch; creating body movements to accompany a fellow student's poem; selecting percussion instruments to accompany the reading of a story."

Four conditions are critical for arts education to flourish, according to recommendations cited in the 1997 *American Canvas* report:

- Well-trained and skilled teachers and/or teaching artists who have a command of an arts discipline and/or a deep understanding of its forms, principles, methods, and its history and tradition
- A well-designed and planned program that takes into account child and adolescent development and the multiple ways in which students learn
- Institutional and community belief in the value of arts in education and stable policies and resources
- An entity or institution external to the school, but linked to it (such as a university, research center, or arts institution), that develops knowledge through

See APPLAUDING THE ARTS, Page 43

NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT, LOCAL DIALOGUE

What does it mean to be literate in the arts? And why will arts literacy matter in the new century? These were among the topics discussed by leaders from the fields of education, politics, arts, and business in a national teleconference that was downlinked to more than 500 sites across the country in December. Hosted by Secretary of Education Richard Riley, "Arts Literacy for a Changing America" was cosponsored by the Department of Education and Arts Education Partnership, a national coalition that promotes the essential role of arts in education.

Portland Schools Superintendent Benjamin Canada, a vocal supporter of arts education, was among the panelists joining in lively conversation and fielding questions from callers across the country. The arts, from Canada's view, are important because they "allow us to go back in history to see what was, while at the same allow us to [illegible] to look at the future. In education, the arts serve an even more vital role," he added. "When you take the arts and weave them into the fabric of what it is we're really trying to teach children, you allow that child to [illegible] success."

Far from an elitist pursuit, the arts are inherently democratic, Canada suggested. "Providing the arts to all children erases the negative effects of what I call *place*—where you were born, where you live, where you happen to go to school. The arts negate that. It levels the learning field so that the child truly has the opportunity to be successful." As the outcome of an arts-infused education, he said, "You can draw. You can paint. You can spell. You can create. You can go anywhere in the world through the use of technology."

According to conference panelists, the arts help students develop literacy in the "four Cs": communication, culture, cognition, and creativity. While literacy has traditionally referred to the written word, it [illegible] meaning in the Information Age when people must be able to comprehend and use multimedia technology. The arts use sights, sounds and movements to convey meaning "beyond the power of words." Getting along in the global neighborhood created by technology will mean being able to understand the perspectives of many people [illegible] lesson the arts teach [illegible] complete education.

Canada stressed [illegible] involve the arts [illegible] the teleconference [illegible] "It takes parents, [illegible] business partners, [illegible] and students [illegible]. We will not accept [illegible] education [illegible] it is not acceptable [illegible]

To continue the dialogue about arts [illegible] at the local level, [illegible] spotlight [illegible] "Questions About Arts Education Every Community Should Ask" [illegible]:

- Why is arts education important for the future of our children?
- What arts programs are in place in our schools to help students prepare for careers in the Information Age?
- Are the arts considered part of the core academic curriculum? Do our students have the opportunity to develop a fuller [illegible] of the [illegible] connecting the arts to other subjects?
- Is the arts education [illegible] preparing students to cope with the [illegible] of new media [illegible] and [illegible] critical to [illegible] communication and [illegible] development?
- How could the [illegible] community [illegible] arts assessment?

PICASSO

IN THE WILDERNESS

When students can't get to the museum, Elk City brings the museum to the students.

Story and photos by JOYCE RIHA LINIK

ELK CITY, Idaho—

The South Fork of the Clearwater arcs through the Bitterroot Mountains like a live electric wire, its curves sudden and unpredictable. Over the years, the current has cut deep through the dense forest, creating a serpentine passage lined with steep walls of granite and thick carpets of Douglas fir. And if you have the stomach to follow the twists and turns of the old Nez Perce trail that winds its way along the river's edge, you will eventually arrive in Elk City--dizzy, no doubt, as a bear that's eaten too many fermenting huckleberries along the path.

Kindergartners and first-graders wade into award-winning books during silent reading time.

Nestled between four federally designated wilderness areas, Elk City is incredibly remote. There is only one road leading in or out. The town's economy has long been based on the area's rich natural resources. Mining came first, followed by logging.

Geographically cut off from the outside world, Elk City residents have always had to be resourceful. In the early days, supplies were packed in by mule, news came on horseback, and tents served as saloons. These days, packages are shipped in by UPS, information comes via the Internet, and the school serves a dual function as a school and a museum.

Yes, a museum.

PRELUDE

The idea came about at a popular gathering spot called the Mother Lode, when some locals got to talking and agreed that "backwoods" didn't have to mean "backward." They realized that their children had the best possible environment to learn about the great outdoors. For botany, geology, or forestry, there was no better teaching ground. Exposure to the arts, however, was another story.

Recognizing that the absence of arts was a weakness in their school curriculum and a disadvantage for Elk City students, the group decided to do something about it. If they couldn't take their children out to an art museum or concert hall, they'd have to bring an art museum and concert hall to their children. They decided to apply for a grant to help incorporate art, music, and literature throughout the curriculum.

Susie Borowicz, Principal of Elk City School, thought this was a grand idea. Sure, the odds were against them. Elk City is a small school in a small town. The school's enrollment fluctuates between 65 and 85 students in kindergarten through 10th grade. The population of Elk City is 450, tops. The school had never received a grant of any kind before.

But, in the spirit of her predecessors, Borowicz didn't let the odds scare her. Like Gertrude Maxwell, Elk City's first schoolteacher—who, upon finding a garter snake in her desk drawer, wrapped it around her neck and continued teaching—Borowicz has spunk. Yes, she is an accomplished teacher and administrator; but she can also do some mean quilting and drop a moose with one shot. Borowicz and her staff applied for not just one grant, but three.

They got them. During the summer of 1996, the school received significant grants from the Albertson Foundation, Goals 2000, and the Idaho Commission on the Arts. Shearer Lumber Products, the local mill and largest employer in town, decided to kick in yet more cash and even a baby grand piano.

No one was more surprised by this wave of good fortune than Borowicz. "Suddenly, we had $58,000 to institute an arts program." Her reaction, she says, was a combination of excitement and fear. "We didn't even have one art or music teacher on staff."

They still don't.

But the entire staff has spent the last two years learning to become arts literate and finding ways to effectively weave arts into their teaching.

Kay Griffith, the teacher who spearheaded the effort to write the grant proposal, had previous experience with arts integration during a teaching stint in California. She was the perfect candidate to coordinate the project. With Borowicz's support, Griffith cut her teaching load in half and became a half-time arts facilitator, a position funded through grant money.

OPENING ACT

Griffith's first task was to assemble some arts resources, to create an arts "library" of sorts. Although the school already had a library, limited funding had left serious gaps in the children's literature section. Griffith set about ordering books that had been Caldecott and Newberry award-winners. She stocked up on classics such as Shakespeare to serve more advanced students and adult community members at the same time. She ordered videos and compact discs, art prints, and teaching guides. To provide students with hands-on learning opportunities, she ordered musical instruments and art supplies.

Then she used her previous experience and new research to train her colleagues in how to use these materials in the classroom. According to staff, the weeklong inservice Griffith planned before the start of the school year was crucial to the success of the program. Griffith modeled lesson plans, showing how art prints, videos, or compact discs might be used to teach everything from math to social studies. She shared tips on how to use each medium most effectively to reinforce teaching. For example, because many children tend to "zone out" when a video is turned on, she advised showing classroom videos in shorter segments.

After the inservice, Griffith visited each teacher in his or her class to model techniques in front of students.

For some staff members, this was the turning point. Take Mike Nelson. A seventh- and eighth-grade teacher, Nelson admits, "I was probably the biggest foot dragger at the

Debbie Layman teaches her first-graders the vocabulary to critique Picasso's "Woman with Yellow Hair."

school. I knew my way worked and thought 'Why rock the boat? It might sink.'" But once Griffith modeled lessons in Nelson's class, he began to believe that while his way worked, this new way might work even better. Nelson hopped on board. Now he uses prints by M.C. Escher to teach about angles, architecture to teach geometry, and music to teach fractions.

"It really works," Nelson says. "We know that people learn in different ways, and this way reaches kids we used to miss. We use arts as a hook to catch them, and they look forward to learning because they're finding that learning can be exciting and fun. By teaching this way, everyone has a chance to let his little star shine."

Other teachers show similar enthusiasm.

Gym teacher Delise Paisley Denham, for instance, used art last year to teach quick thinking, coordination, and teamwork. She would point to an art print on the wall and give the students mere moments to reenact the scene.

Debbie Layman, a first-grade teacher, instills a love of visual arts in her students. At ages six and seven, they are already becoming grounded in arts terminology and technique. Poster-sized art prints—by Picasso and Klimt, Pollack and de Kooning—hang on clotheslines across her room.

Recently, she has been instructing first-graders in the use of lines. At her direction, the children stand up straight and tall to imitate vertical lines, lie on the floor to be horizontal, and lean precariously on one leg to demonstrate their understanding of diagonals.

Layman uses a Caldecott Award-winning author to help the students gain further understanding. In Emily Arnold McCully's *Starring Mirette and Bellini*, the young Mirette uses her high-wire walking skill to achieve a daring rescue. It is a diagonal tightrope, the children point out, that saves the day.

Next the class relates the lesson to famous artworks, noting the use of diagonal lines in a farmer's field and the line of the horizon. The lesson segues into music when Layman introduces a song called "Planting Seeds." She helps students understand which directional lines fit the stages of a plant's life —horizontal for the earth when the seeds are planted, vertical when the seedling reaches for the sun.

FINDING THEIR RHYTHM

Music, many staff members contend, has been more challenging to work into the curriculum. But at Elk City School, no one is jolted by the traditional clanging of a bell at the start or end of a school day. Instead, the day may begin with a rendition of Debussy's "L' Isle Joyeuse" or Copland's "Theme for the Common Man." It may end with Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" or Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmuzik." During the Silent Sustained Reading and journal-writing periods that coincide throughout the school, classical music continues to pour through the P.A. system.

In individual classrooms, many teachers use boom boxes to play classical music during group projects, study time, even during tests. Sometimes, teachers use specific styles of music or famous works to support studies in history or social studies—jazz for African American culture, or Copland's "Billy The Kid" for studies of the American frontier.

Third- and fourth-grade teacher Jill Wilson plays classical music in the background all day long. "When I turn it off," she says, "I notice that students get off task."

Indeed, researchers are finding that classical music may enhance learning by improving the temporal-spatial abilities of the brain.

Second-grade teacher Rea Ann Loomis has been bringing her guitar to class periodically over the past 15 years, but beyond that, she has used the arts infrequently in her teaching.

"I have a real interest in art and music," Loomis says, "but I never knew how to get it into the classroom." Elk City's arts program has changed all that.

Loomis's students have been studying the Impressionists. Posters and prints of various sizes are everywhere: the paintings of Degas, Renoir, and Van Gogh hang near artwork by students Bashaw, Coy, and Tinker. Claude Monet is a class favorite. Children's books about the French Impressionist stand along a display table, near student essays on the artist. As a tribute, they have painted their own versions of Monet's famous water lilies in preparation for a mural in the gymnasium. Seven-year-old Teisha explains the technique: "You paint with blobs. When you're up close you can't see anything. But when you back up, there it is."

In an exercise called "Impressionist Art Detectives," Loomis assigns each student a famous art print from the "art gallery" on a classroom wall. Each student is to give three clues so that the other students can try to guess which painting they are observing.

The students' clues demonstrate surprisingly indepth knowledge of art technique.

Robbie's clues for Monet's "Branch of the Seine Near Giverny" include observations such as: "It has a vanishing point," and, "It has cool colors." By "cool" he does not mean nifty, but rather the blues, greens, and other bands in the spectrum that are considered cool.

Dusty notes that "Seascape Storm" by painter Orage Marine is more realistic in style and that "the light source is coming from the left." While he may not remember the term "focal point," another clue explains that "the artist wants you to look at the biggest thing in the picture." Dusty is right; the focal point is the sailboat that dominates the canvas.

Loomis has also used art to support learning in other subject areas.

> "We know that people learn in different ways, and this way reaches kids we used to miss."

A recent unit on whales resulted not only in science instruction but also in the creation of whale drawings for a calendar. Each month features student artwork along with a whale fact such as: "Orcas belong to a group called a pod. Each pod has its own sound for communicating." Or, "A blue whale can weigh as much as 25 elephants." The class had the calendars spiral-bound and sold them for $4 each to raise money to "adopt" a whale in the Puget Sound. The adoption program provides money for whale research and care.

Principal Susie Borowicz also happens to be an accomplished teacher, quilter, and moose hunter.

ORCHESTRATING SUPPORT

If teachers have difficulty coordinating lesson plans these days, help is just down the hall in the Grant Room. Beyond the supplies purchased with grant money, there is an additional resource this year: Ali Tiegs, who assumed the arts facilitator position when Griffith resigned to pursue an opportunity out of the country.

Tiegs is a firm believer in arts integration. "Teachers become more aware of learning styles—audio, visual, spatial, kinesthetic," she says. "Not everybody learns the same. The challenge as a teacher is to find out how each student learns."

Tiegs also has organized a visiting-artists program at the school. So far, they've hosted dance companies and steel drum bands, stained-glass artisans and watercolor artists, sculptors and printmakers.

This year, Idaho Theatre for Youth will have visited twice with children's productions—first, *Lincoln's Log*, a historical play on Abraham Lincoln, and next week, *Tomato Girl*, a story whose characters are your garden-variety vegetables, with a moral message regarding friendship.

At a weekly planning meeting, Tiegs and her fellow teachers prepare for the upcoming *Tomato Girl* production. They brainstorm about related materials that might reinforce the message delivered by the play. Layman suggests that her first-graders teach their "Planting Seeds" song to the rest of the student body. Loomis mentions that an art print, James McDonald's "The Tangled Garden," might be a good visual-arts link. Another teacher, Lynn Johnson, mentions a storybook that might be a fit.

All of the teachers agree that the arts-integration project has enriched the learning experience for their students. Students now recognize the works of master painters and request classical music by composer—sometimes even by work. One teacher says a student told her he'd heard Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" on a trip out of town.

OVATIONS

Students' newly gained arts expertise has been a boon to their self-esteem. Like other small, rural communities, Borowicz points out, Elk City doesn't have enough students to field sports teams. "Now," she says, "they can go out and meet kids from other schools and have something unique to share."

"For children in a remote area, who otherwise would not have had exposure to a world outside their own, there has been a whole broadening of perspective," says Judy Leuck, Director of Supervision and Personnel for the Grangeville School District. In addition to simple exposure to the arts, Leuck has also seen much more curriculum integration in general. And she's seen the results on standardized testing, more proof that the approach is working where it matters most—in student performance.

Test scores have risen significantly since the arts-integration project was instituted. On the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), the school average for grades two through 10 rose from 30.4 in the 1995-96 school year to 52.3 in the 1996-97 school year. There have also been high increases in writing assessment scores. In fact, last year, Elk City eighth-graders' scores surpassed all other eighth-graders in the district in direct writing and math assessments.

Surprising? Not really. As more and more programs like Elk City's reach students, indications are that the left brain knows what the right is doing. And vice versa.

"All the evidence points to a relationship between the arts and other academic disciplines that is clear and compelling, indicating to both fields that one cannot really flourish without the influence of the other," says Jerold Ross, Director of the National Arts Education Research Center at New York University.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education recognized the improvement in performance in Elk City by awarding the school Title I Accelerated School status.

Elk City has managed to keep the attention of the Albertson Foundation, receiving a second-year grant from the foundation, and the Idaho Commission on the Arts which has designated Elk City as a partner site.

"And the kids aren't the only ones growing around here," Borowicz adds. "We teachers are learning, too."

In fact, although the arts grant funds are waning and will not afford the school an arts facilitator for a third year, Elk City teachers are confident that arts integration is here to stay.

Loomis has indicated an interest in overseeing the Grant Room resources. And mentor teachers can help new staff learn the strategies for arts integration.

"If I ever leave here," says Nelson, "I'll take it with me. The only problem is that the new school might not have such incredible resources."

Renny Parker is the school librarian at Elk City. Thom Parker, her husband, is bus driver, custodian, and the morning-address speaker at the school. They are also parents of one of last year's students who, by many accounts, "blossomed" under the arts program. This year, their daughter Bryn is attending high school in Grangeville, a two-hour drive down that twisting, turning road. Growing up in Elk City has taught generations of young people to be resourceful and to appreciate the beauty of the natural world. But the Parkers credit Elk City's new arts program with helping Bryn develop the skills and confidence to go for a part in the high school play. She landed the lead.

"The arts program was a great intro to what's out there—the possibilities," Renny Parker says. "For the kids that go for the challenge, they profit. I mean, for a lifetime." ■

RAISING A COMMUNITY

What does it take to get loggers and forest preservationists to work together?

In Elk City, Idaho, the answer is as simple as a group of children who need a place to perform.

During the past two years, the community has rallied around an arts integration program at the local school. Many residents are parents who have seen the excitement that's now connected with learning. Others have attended recent performances by visiting musicians and theatrical groups, as well as presentations that showcase the new skills and talents being developed by the students.

If they have ever warmed the bleachers at Elk City School, however, they know that the gymnasium has the acoustics of a potato bin.

"When we have graduation," says Principal Susie Borowicz, "we can't even hear who's graduating."

As a result, the community has rallied together to build a new performing arts center. Shearer Lumber Products—the local mill and largest employer in town—is donating the labor. The Forest Service, the second-largest employer in town, is donating the raw timber for the project. And the Western Framers Guild, an offshoot of the organization that helped to rebuild Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, will be working with community members to raise the frame this fall.

"The plan is to for everybody to get together and put it up in just a few days," says Borowicz, "kind of like a barn raising."

The performing arts center project is being used as a learning tool for students, as well. Students have been involved in determining the optimal position for the building near a mountain ridge called Buffalo Hump, considering the angle of the sun throughout the year to keep the building coolest in summer and warmest in winter. Students have also helped to calculate the quantity of dirt that must be removed for the foundation, and some will assist in building the actual structure.

The new center will provide much more than a place to hold school plays. According to Borowicz, when one of the town's pioneers passed away a couple of years back, there wasn't a place big enough to hold all the folks who wanted to pay their respects. Soon, that will be a problem of the past.

The new center will provide a much-needed space that the entire community can enjoy.

THE WEAVE O

By keenly confronting the enigmas that surround us . . . I ended up in the domain of mathematics. I often seem to have more in common with mathematicians than with my fellow artists.

—Maurits Cornelis Escher

PORTLAND, Oregon—She's a head taller than he is. They eye each other dubiously, then turn back-to-back. The boy plants his feet firmly as the girl leans into him, her shoulder blades pressing into his. Trusting their weight to each other, they strike a counterbalance and sink into a deep knee-bend.

Dancer Keith Goodman taps out an accompanying tempo with a clave, then pauses as mathematics teacher Michael Lang steps forward. Lang asks the other assembled eighth-graders, "When Melinda and Terrance were standing back-to-back, what kind of symmetry was that?"

A reflection!

"Okay. And when they lowered to the floor, what kind of transformation occurred?"

A translation!

Lang asks them to explain. A translation is when an object is

Jackson Middle School students (clockwise from left: Miranda White, Jake Purcell, Banah Graf, Annie New) strike a pose that teaches them about geometry, movement, and teamwork.

WHAT'S DANCE GOT TO DO WITH MATH? JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING.

Story and photos by [illegible]

F THE WORLD

moved to a new position without changing its orientation. He probes further: So, what would a glide reflection be? A glide reflection combines a reflection with a translation in which only one element slides, or glides, to a new position. Lang nods in agreement.

This is math class, but unlike any these students have experienced before. They are midway through a three-week unit integrating geometry and art. Right now, they're learning how choreographers incorporate tessellations and symmetry into dance. Goodman directs the students to break into groups. The youngsters, a combined mathematics class of about 60 students at Jackson Middle School in Portland, Oregon, disperse across the auditorium floor in boisterous but intent clusters.

As a choreographer and dancer with Conduit, a Portland contemporary dance studio, Goodman often incorporates tessellations—arrangements of shapes into symmetrical and repeating patterns—into his works. His dances influenced by the African Diaspora, for instance, resonate with images, patterns, and rhythms found in the dances of Africans who were displaced around the world by the slave trade. But it

wasn't until Goodman began coteaching with mathematics teachers Lang and Ken Reiner in this geometry project that he recognized the extent to which he relies on mathematics when choreographing. He's eager to share this revelation with these students.

"Okay," Goodman calls above the din. "You're going to create a movement tessellation that lasts from eight to 24 counts that you mirror, or reflect, on either side of a line. Now, at some point in that movement, you're going to rotate one of the sides 180 degrees, keeping the movement going, then you're going to do a glide reflection of it."

The students begin striking poses, mirroring each other's gestures and measuring dance steps—exploring their creative powers at the same time that they are developing their understanding of geometric principles.

Symmetry is part of the weave of the world. It's in the inkblot patterns of butterfly wings and in crystals of snow. It underlies the beauty and function of suspension bridges and the flying buttresses of cathedrals. It is apparent in computer programming and DNA sequences. From artists and musicians to architects and mathematicians, people devise patterns and symmetries to express human experience and to reshape environments. The language of mathematics governs these enterprises, and mastering this language can powerfully affirm one's place in the society of human beings.

For teachers like Ken Reiner, 50, and Michael Lang, 43, empowering young people to take their place in society is a potent motivation. They teach eighth-grade mathematics to students of varying academic abilities. Both men are highly effective teachers. They keep abreast of mathematics standards and best practices. They design active and challenging lessons, and question with skill and enthusiasm. And yet, they worry that they aren't reaching every student.

An opportunity to try something new arose when Jackson Middle School received a Bernstein Education Through the Arts (BETA) grant from the Leonard Bernstein Center. The center awarded the school $30,000 a year for three years to integrate arts into its core curriculum. Lang and Reiner subsequently designed a geometry unit on tessellations involving mathematics, visual art, and dance. Neither had done this kind of thing before, and planning the new unit took a considerable amount of their time—about 20 hours stolen from the school day, afternoons, and weekends. Nevertheless, they shared an emerging conviction that art could be a key to mathematical understanding for many students.

For Reiner, watching his students work with a choreographer on their movement tessellations was a memorable moment in his career as a mathematics teacher.

"Keith [Goodman] asked the kids to come up with some movement pattern using certain mathematical concepts, and every one of those 16 groups of students immediately began working," Reiner says. "I was amazed. I never thought eighth-grade students would be so uninhibited and would come up with such concise and amazing movement patterns."

The teachers' primary goals for the project were that students would understand the geometry of polygons—angle measurements, regular and semiregular polygons, and how polygons tessellate—and that students would make a connection between these mathematical concepts and the real world.

Reiner and Lang introduced students to the masterworks of the Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher and the American dance company Pilobolus, based in rural Connecticut but known to audiences worldwide. These artists create geometric patterns in highly innovative and dynamic ways. Students examined Escher's precise

TOP: Anna Hermann's regular tessellation features fish and quadrilaterals.

BOTTOM:
Banah Graf arranged turtle shapes into repetitive patterns in this regular tessellation

and fantastic worlds, delighting in his engravings of morphing triangles, lizard mosaics, and staircases that trick the eye. They were intrigued by the ways in which the artist plays with natural phenomena—gravity, optics, and spatial dimensions.

They watched on videotape how Pilobolus undertakes similar explorations in dance. The leotard-clad dancers create geometric shapes and patterns with their bodies, joining hands and feet, or entwining in improbable clusters of torsos and appendages, only to metamorphose into new forms and patterns.

Early in the project, students completed worksheets on lines of symmetry and practiced arranging polygons into regular and semiregular tessellations. They drew their own tessellations by combining polygons into imaginative and colorful images—such as goldfish, foxes, and sunbursts—and arranging them into repetitive patterns. When Goodman, an accomplished professional dancer and seasoned instructor at Buckman Elementary in Portland, agreed to collaborate with Lang and Reiner on their project, he sat in on several classroom activities to familiarize himself with the concepts students were learning. He then began meeting with students in the school's auditorium.

Goodman captured the students' attention and imagination, and they worked with high energy and focus. He taught them to choreograph movement tessellations—brief dances or drill routines that combine the geometric principles students had been studying in the classroom. The auditorium echoed with young voices quickly mastering and mingling the two vocabularies of dance and mathematics.

"The arts are an integral part of mathematics, especially in the field of geometry," says Reiner. "If you don't relate mathematics to the real world, to such things as dance, you're doing a disservice to students. There is so much that you can get out of studying the arts that will help you to understand mathematics, it's incredible."

Lang agrees: "By bringing in the arts, students see that mathematics is not just present when they're sitting in their chairs in the classroom. It's all around—schools of fish, patterns in the sky, the flow of traffic. It all has a mathematical pattern."

The two men arrived at this conviction by way of different life experiences. Art has played a steady role in Lang's life. As a child he learned piano, and now he plays guitar every night for his own children. But it wasn't until he saw an exhibit of Escher prints at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., that he began to perceive how art might give rise to "teachable moments" in mathematics. The prints depicted mathematically conceived images based on geometry and symmetry. Lang could see how students, likely to be intrigued by the fanciful images, might also be drawn to the mathematical concepts the artist employed in his craft.

"That was a pivotal moment for me," he remembers. It led him to think about other areas of art that might facilitate students' understanding of mathematics, such as weaving, music, and dance.

For Reiner, athletics have been at the center of his creative life. Basketball and baseball as a youth, and now golf, have taught him to develop his own physical skills and also perform in front of spectators. He also knows what it is to be a good team player. In this instance, he listened to his "teammate," Lang, when he suggested that they collaborate on an interdisciplinary unit in which students would learn the concept of tessellating polygons by choreographing their own dances.

"I said, 'You want to do *what?*'" recalls Reiner with a laugh. "It was so far from traditional teaching—the dance part was just not me! But the more we talked about it, I began to think, why not? Middle school students *need* movement, and this seemed just perfect."

Nevertheless, Lang and Reiner

experienced some anxiety about doing the unit. They worried about the extra planning time it would require. They worried about preparing students to meet the state's benchmarks in mathematics. And they worried what parents would think. To ensure that students would gain important mathematical knowledge, the teachers incorporated concepts and activities recommended by the Oregon state standards for mathematics and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

"I had to justify it for myself by going to NCTM and the state standards and making sure that there were direct links between this project and the standards," says Lang. "You're always worried about the community's reaction to what you do in the classroom. I was worried that parents would think I was supposed to be teaching 'math,' not dance."

The teachers also had to overcome a mild case of stage fright. Teachers involved in Bernstein-funded projects receive training in how to integrate arts into other disciplines. One training activity required Lang and Reiner and other teachers to perform a skit for each other. Although they stand before an audience of students every school day, the teachers found performing in front of their colleagues to be unnerving. But they summoned their courage and, in the end, the skit turned out to be quite a romp, with extravagant costumes borrowed from the Portland Opera.

P[illegible]

For a day, the adults played like children.

"We really became middle school kids. And now we have a lot of empathy for the students, because it's *hard* to be up in front of your peers," says Reiner.

But for their young students, performing for peers was only one challenge. Facing the bewildering and timeworn trials of adolescence presented a host of others. Boys and girls had to touch and trust each other as dance partners. They had to muster their still-developing powers of coordination and rhythm. And the choreography required them to think both concretely and abstractly. The adults stood by as the youngsters persevered with surprising maturity.

Forming movement tessellations with their own bodies helped many students to grasp the differences between a regular tessellation and a semiregular tessellation. It also helped them to understand how to accomplish symmetry in patterns by rotating, reflecting, translating, and glide reflecting. The project earned high marks, not only from students but also from parents who remarked on their children's surging enthusiasm for math class.

"All my anxieties were worthless!" says Lang, "It worked out really well."

It is now several weeks after the project, and students sit on the floor, reflecting on the experience. They're eager to share their thoughts, and their words tumble over each other's in an ebullient rush.

"It was easier translating a glide reflection in the dance. I never understood it when we were just moving shapes around on paper."

"I had to look at it on paper first before I could do it in the dance."

"I didn't like math, it was boring, and I didn't want to come to class and do nothing. Now, I kind of got into it."

"Dance is filled with mathematics, you just have to find it."

In addition to learning mathematics, it's evident that students also learned a little more about themselves.

"I learn better in groups, where you can learn from each other."

"Some people have individual talents, and they can bring that to the group."

"We had to cooperate. If both people weren't cooperating in a counterbalance, you'd fall over."

So, what role can art play in mathematics?

A quiet voice answers from the back: "It cleans the mind and the soul."

The students laugh at their classmate's poetics, but they nod, eyes bright.

Denise Jarrett is a writer with NWREL's Mathematics and Science Education Center. ■

ENGAGING MODELS

Bringing the arts into the classroom [illegible] [illegible] to teaching the arts [illegible] These two approaches to teaching the arts, both being used [illegible] Northwest, offer plenty of [illegible] for classroom innovation.

[illegible] Since its founding in 1982, the Los Angeles-based Getty Education Institute for the Arts has been a leader in developing discipline-based art education (DBAE) as a "holistic, comprehensive, and multifaceted approach" to learning. Rather than delivering a curriculum, DBAE offers an approach to instruction and learning about the visual arts.

In conducting assessments for the *Arts Report Card* issued last year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress looked for students who were engaged in the processes of creating, performing, and responding to the visual and performing arts. These are similar to the four broad disciplines the Getty Institute describes as [illegible]

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[illegible] *A Guide to Discipline-Based Art Education* by Stephen Mark Dobbs (The Getty Education Institute for the Arts, [illegible]) describes the history and theory of this comprehensive approach to teaching the visual arts. Dobbs describes each of the four disciplines [illegible] discussion of issues students can be expected to explore as a result of art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. As an open-ended model, DBAE can be tailored to fit such variables as demographics of student population, students' ages and grade levels, access to cultural and community resources, technical support, and budget.

[illegible] they begin [illegible] what they [illegible] on what they [illegible]

Involving students [illegible] hands-on experience, inquiry, creation, and reflection are the cornerstones of the Leonard Bernstein Center's trademarked approach known as Artful Learning. The strategies of the Bernstein model, incorporated into educational products and adopted by participating schools, include

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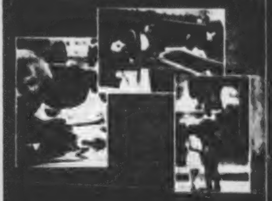

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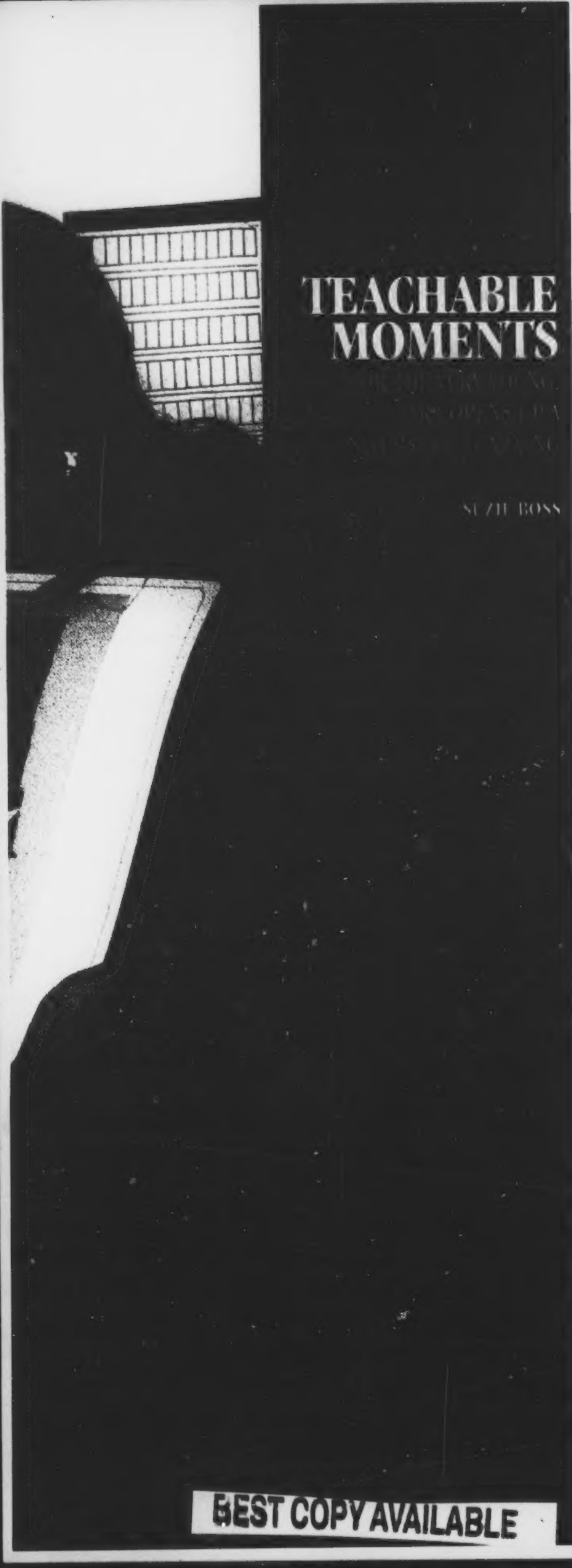

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

[illegible]

SUZIE BOSS

JUNEAU, Alaska—Daily routines are opportunities for small celebrations in the lives of young children. Mimi Walker understands this. That's why morning at Riverbend Elementary School begins with her students gathered in a circle for a weather report, a new day highlighted on the calendar, and a settling-in song that gives 23 kindergartners and first-graders a chance to practice the sounds of the alphabet while welcoming each other by name.

"We forgot some people," says a little boy in a tie-dyed T-shirt when the song ends.

"Who?" asks Walker, leaning toward him to signal that she's listening.

"Bee—baa—Beethoven!" he sings out.

Another child picks up the thread and chimes in with, "Vee—vaa—van Gogh!"

Walker smiles and gets in the game. "Anyone with a 'K'?" she prompts.

"Kay—kah—Kandinsky!" the students sing out in an unrehearsed chorus. As if on cue, they point to the back of the classroom where a poster of the Russian abstract artist's work hangs above a giant penmanship sample of a letter "K."

For these students, learning about famous artists and musicians is as basic as learning the ABCs. Nurturing creative children is what Walker attempts to do every day, in small moments of wonder and delight. In her multiage classroom, she weaves lessons about the arts throughout the day and across the curriculum. It's a journey of discovery for students and teacher alike.

When she was a towheaded girl, growing up in the shadow of Juneau's mountain peaks, Mimi Walker always had a sketchpad in hand. "I wanted to be an artist," recalls the now 45-year-old teacher. "I drew all the time." Her artistic inclination came naturally, fed by family and environment. Her mother directed community theater productions and served on the state arts council. Her sister had a passion for music (and would grow up to be an elementary music teacher in Juneau). In southeastern Alaska, a land carved by glaciers and blanketed by forests, carvings and murals adorn public buildings and grace private spaces. According to Bill Reid, a Haida artist whose words enlighten visitors to the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, "The people of the Northwest Coast . . . centered their society around what was to them the essence of life: what we now call 'Art.'"

By the time she graduated from Montana State University with a degree in art, a minor in history, and a secondary teaching credential, Walker hoped to center her life around art, too, as a high school teacher. But back home in Juneau, she found slim pickings for even the most passionate arts specialists. "There was one opening in 10 years," she relates with a sigh. She earned an elementary endorsement and, nine years ago, began teaching in the primary grades—not as an arts specialist, but as an ordinary classroom teacher. Well, maybe not so ordinary.

Far from being disappointed with the career change, Walker was right at home in the world of the young child where learning takes place by exploring with eyes and ears and hands, the basic toolkit of the artist. With a smile of satisfaction, she confides, "I've found a way to teach art every day."

As her students settle into the rhythms of the day, Walker offers a hint about today's lesson plan. "I'm going to introduce you to a brand-new artist," she tells the class. But first, she sets the stage by reminding students what they've been learning about their senses.

With the children sitting cross-legged in a circle around her, she reads a book called *Lucy's Picture*. In the story, a little girl uses feathers and fur and other tactile objects to create her unusual "picture" for her grandfather. Walker asks the group, "What is it she's adding? What do these things give her picture?"

"Texture," suggests a first-grader named Rebekah, earning a quick but energetic nod of agreement from the teacher.

As the story continues, the children begin to realize that Lucy's grandfather is blind. Then their questions come quickly (and questions are always welcome in this circle of learning). "How does he get into bed?" "How does he write?" "Can he speak and hear?" "Why does he have a dog?" Each query offers a new chance for discussion about sight and the other senses, discussion that naturally fosters language development.

In earlier lessons in this unit, the children have explored the senses at literacy stations, with hands-on activities designed to engage them in independent and small-group learning. They've also learned about the life and work of Beethoven, the great composer who lost his hearing. A huge, colorful portrait of Beethoven hangs just outside the classroom door, created by the whole class as a cooperative mural project. Children's comments about the composer have been typed up and posted around the edges of the mural, including this remark by a first-grader: "He wasn't able to hear when he was composing. He heard the music in his mind."

With Walker as choreographer, the class segues from one activity to the next. Today, for instance, she exits storytime by inviting the children onto their feet to join her in a song. The "song" is Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," and they "sing" in sign language. Then, as she directs them to their journals and book boxes for independent work on reading and writing, she plays a recording of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." She invites them to compare this piece with the symphonies they've heard, gently guiding them to draw parallels and notice differences. A little boy stops in his tracks to listen. "It's mellower," he says, then makes his way to a table, eager to write in his journal.

When she tries to articulate the lessons that the arts offer her students, Walker finds herself momentarily at a loss for words. "It's huge," she says, gesturing around her classroom at all the evidence. A big picture window, frosty around the edges on this chilly winter morning, is dotted with tissue-paper stars that resemble stained glass. Children's drawings made in the style of van Gogh line one wall, next to reproductions of the Dutch master's swirling yellow sunflowers and wavy blue irises. On the next wall, beside the letters of the alphabet, examples of Matisse's bold, contrasting shapes hang next to a graph the children made, involving pumpkin seeds. Overhead, a Chinese dragon kite runs the length of the room while a school of paper salmon, made from real fish using a printmaking technique that shows details of fins and scales, appears to swim toward the doorway. Animal masks the class made to enact a legend hang above a bulletin board, watching over this busy scene that delights the senses.

"Art is a way of communicating that involves history, expression, and creativity," Walker says, summarizing the philosophy that guides her teaching style. "In life, it's the creative person who stands out. That's the adult I'd want to hire or get to know." Teaching through art, she believes, "allows children to be creative every day."

Rather than teaching drawing or music as subjects separate from the rest of learning, Walker weaves all of the arts throughout her lesson plans. She uses broad themes to teach the concepts and critically important skills of the primary grades, and finds support for her methods at the local and state levels. The Juneau school district takes a whole-language approach to literacy and endorses such practices as project-based education, student-centered classrooms, and an integrated curriculum. Alaska's content standards for the arts affirm that "the study of the arts is essential to a basic education .... Most of all, the arts ask children to develop their own responses to questions." Walker's classroom practices inspire children to ask questions, seek answers, create meaning for themselves.

A three-week unit on bears, for instance, started with an Iroquois legend, "The Boy Who Lived with Bears." She told it to the children; then—in the traditional way that legends are passed along—they told it back to her. Making the language their own, they rewrote it into a play and illustrated their script. Each child chose an animal to portray. Children too shy to speak their lines aloud became musicians, selecting percussion instruments to "announce" the various animals on stage. They researched real bears—the stars of the story and animals native to Alaska. A biologist visited the class, bringing bear skins and bear skulls for the children to touch and feel. They used their math skills to count, measure, and graph bear teeth. They baked bear paw pastries, complete with the anatomically correct number of almond "claws." They sang bear songs and danced an Indian circle dance. They made pottery bears. They interviewed family members to gather real-life bear stories. Finally, they put on the play for their parents, wearing animal masks they made by placing plaster casts directly on their faces. When the arts are used to expand learning, Walker says, "It spirals into a huge picture."

Today, when the children return from recess, Walker is finally ready to introduce them to the "brand-new artist." She unfurls an enlarged self-portrait of Henri Matisse, with black-and-white lines suggesting a curious countenance. A little boy ventures a guess: "Picasso?" "No, but we'll get to him in a couple weeks," she promises. "Is he an Impressionist?" asks another, intuitively seeking to put this new artist into context.

For the next half hour, Walker leads a lively conversation about the life and work of the French painter. She begins with some storytelling, helping the children get acquainted with the man behind the art. She guides them to France on the world map. She writes the years of his birth and death on the chalkboard (numbers she'll use again later, in math lessons), and points out that Matisse lived later than the Impressionists they have already studied. She tells them how Matisse studied to become a lawyer, but took up painting to help pass the time during a long illness. "He found out that he loved making art more than being a lawyer, so he went to art school. This made his family unhappy, because they had been so proud that he was a lawyer," she explains.

Drawing on her training in discipline-based art education, Walker helps her students understand the elements of art that make Matisse's work distinctive and of lasting importance. Gesturing to reproductions of his vibrant paintings, she points out his use of color. She helps the children see why his paintings look "flat." Keeping the concepts at the children's level, she uses one of her own student's drawings to show what she means by "perspective." Then, tying the lesson into the unit on senses, she explains how, late in life, Matisse's eyesight began to fail him. "But he found a way to keep making art," she adds.

With that, Walker shifts to a hands-on project: making cutouts in the style of Matisse in his later years, when his vision was weak but his passion for art remained strong. Before she turns students loose with paper, glue, and scissors, however, she engages them in a discussion of the elements that work best in such projects. One by one, children step up to point out examples of contrast, repeating shapes, repeating colors, positive and negative space, abstract designs, background, foreground. They exhibit an understanding of artistic concepts that makes today's parent helper—an experienced art teacher herself—gasp in amazement. ("I've never seen such high-level thinking from such young children," she says.) Finally, Walker shows the children other cutouts, done by previous classes, and invites them to give "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" to what they see. As young as five and six, these children are developing their own aesthetic sense of what moves them, what leaves them cold, and why.

When Walker selects a theme or an artist for class study, "I choose ones I feel a passion for," she says. She also looks for subjects that will give her diverse class opportunities to appreciate what makes each person special and distinctive.

Nearly half of this year's 23 students are ethnic or racial minorities, including children whose heritage is Tlingit, Eskimo, Hispanic, Chinese, African American, Filipino. Two children receive assistance for social and emotional concerns. Two others are in special education programs. Two speak English as a second language. Two have been identified as gifted. "The more you know about other cultures, other people," Walker says, "the more accepting you are. We learn that differences are wonderful."

She includes a unit on Tlingit art and culture, for example, to give all her students a better sense of the place where they live and her Native children a chance to share their heritage. One little boy took special delight in studying birds because his family is part of the Raven clan. Talking about abstract art earlier this year is what led the class to a discussion of Kandinsky's work (and a child's astute insight that "realism looks the same to everyone, but abstract art can be different to everybody"), and a celebration of one little girl's Russian roots.

Sometimes, Walker has to wait for her own creativity to breathe a project to life. For years, she had been wishing for a way to introduce her students to the American artist Mary Cassatt, famous for her paintings of mothers and children. "But how would I do her justice?" was the question she couldn't answer. Then, in a workshop, while watching a film about an innovative early education program in the northern Italian town of Reggio Emilia, she found herself nearly bursting with excitement. She saw a way to adapt a teaching technique invented in Italy and introduce it to her children living here, on the uppermost edge of North America.

The result of that inspiration is a Mother's Day project Walker now looks forward to doing each spring. Onto a clear easel, lit from behind, she projects a slide of one of Cassatt's paintings. The children trace the outlines of mother and child, capturing the artist's balanced composition. Then, they draw the details of facial features in their own family's image.

Flipping through a collection of these unique mother-child drawings, done in rich oil pastels and alive with originality, Walker beams with pride. "The drawings are child-like, but they have Cassatt's softness. They capture a relationship, what's special about how the children see themselves and their mothers."

Creativity is what excites Walker, what makes teaching new each year, each day. "You can't get this stuff out of a textbook," she says. "It comes from within, from the teacher's creative side."

Weaving the arts into her primary classroom has its drawbacks. "It is messy," she admits, "and it takes time, and you need materials." She has a classroom budget and parents make donations, but she spends as much as $4,000 a year out of her own pocket to purchase additional supplies. Every closet in her classroom is jammed with project boxes, labeled according to unit topic. "I'm the last one out of the building every summer, packing up my stuff," she admits.

But she wouldn't have it any other way. "This is the way I *have* to teach," she says.

At the day's end, Walker grows silent for a heartbeat after her children make their noisy exit. But then her eyes wander across the room to a computer. She offers to show a visitor the multimedia project her first-graders did last year. They used a computer program called HyperStudio ... conducted independent research on the birds of Alaska ... made bird sculptures to scale ... generated maps color-coded by seasons .... "Just wait until you see what they created," she says, and she's off and running, celebrating the moment. ■

'THE ARTS CAN TAKE YOU THERE'

SALEM, Oregon—At Walker Middle School, it's easy for kids to point out Vye Carlile's classroom. Hers is the one with a sofa, an easy chair, a refrigerator, and seasonal centerpieces atop clusters of desks. "This is my home for most of the day. Why shouldn't it be beautiful, just like your living room at home?" asks the animated teacher who launched the school's English as a Second Language program four years ago.

arlile uses all of the arts—from decorative to culinary to visual to performing—to help her 52 students (from nations as diverse as Mexico, Vietnam, and Russia) understand American culture, as well as the academic subjects of English and social studies.

She [illegible] class [illegible] arts and [illegible] books, and [illegible] in a host of other creative activities intended to help them take her lessons to heart. She boldly leads the way, although she considers herself a "terrible" singer and a mediocre artist. "But I get up and do it in front of them, and that gives them confidence. I grade on participation, not the excellence of their singing or drawing."

he lessons extend well beyond the classroom. Carlile regularly takes her students on field trips to local restaurants and cultural events, where they'll have a chance to soak up more information about their adopted country. "You just have to get creative with funding," she says, reflecting the wisdom that comes with 28 years of teaching and the reality of working with low-income families. "I ask restaurants, what can you do for $1 a kid? And they bend over backwards to treat our kids nicely." Carlile, who was born in [illegible] and learned German as her first language, has a Ph.D. in curriculum instruction from the University of Texas. She was awarded a Metlife Fellowship in 1998, which allowed her to travel to Washington, D.C., to compare notes with other exemplary teachers of culturally diverse classrooms.

bout once a month, Carlile's students go all out to transform their room into the Café Bilingue. They decorate in keeping with a monthly theme, such as ancient Greece or African culture, [illegible] the [illegible] day [illegible] the [illegible]. The room [illegible] with art, music, and food. "We want them to feel another culture," Carlile explains. "They [illegible] taste it, hear it, smell it [illegible] be there. And the arts are what can take you there."

[illegible] an event for a "mainstream" class, the ESL students get to take a leadership role. There's always a game that requires the guests to learn new information about the culture of the month. "And my kids are the experts," Carlile says, beaming. "It elevates their status."

hat gives Carlile, a youthful-looking 50, the energy to tackle such time-intensive projects? "I need to be creative myself," she confesses, "or I get bored."

Vye Carlile helps her English as a Second Language students prepare desserts for the Café Bilingue, a monthly feast of food, music, and art.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Students at The Northwest Academy learn that creativity has real world applications

Hallie Williamson assists a crew member on the set of "The PJs" at Will Vinton Studios

PORTLAND, Oregon— From the outside, the nondescript warehouse in Portland's teeming industrial hub gives no clues that crews inside are hard at work on production of a major network television series. No signs identify the set, no security guards block the entrance, no passwords are necessary to enter the building. Aside from a smile or wave, no one gives Hallie Williamson a second glance as she walks into the studio and picks up her assignment.

At home among the artists, animators, technicians, and designers who bring the foam puppets to life on the animated Fox series "The PJs," 16-year-old Hallie is no seasoned TV veteran. In fact, this energetic redhead in khakis and sneakers has just come from a full day of classes at The Northwest Academy. The independent secondary school pulls from the city's resources to offer its students an arts-infused curriculum, a solid background in cutting-edge technologies, and plenty of opportunities to learn from working professionals. Some might see Will Vinton Studios — where the series is produced and filmed—as an unlikely classroom, but The Northwest Academy thinks it is the ideal place for Hallie to learn the art and craft of television production work.

As part of the school's media-arts immersion program, Hallie spends one afternoon a week as an intern for "The PJs." Her work on the show takes place behind the scenes, usually in the studio's model department where she makes lips and eyebrows for puppets, paints eyelids, washes tiny ears and elbows, or forms miniature corn flakes and Cocoa Puffs from clay. Hallie's tasks may be small, but the lessons she is learning are significant.

"I'm just glad I'm not running coffee around here," Hallie jokes. Industry hopefuls twice her age would kill to run coffee on a real set, but that doesn't phase this poised, confident teenager. "When they give me a project, I don't have a choice. I have to do it. That discipline has helped me with homework and other things I don't always want to do," she explains. "It has also made school a lot more relevant."

Making the arts relevant is at the core of The Northwest Academy's philosophy. The school offers a roster of specialized classes in performing, visual, and media arts, most of them taught by professionals in each field. Job shadow and internship opportunities abound. State-of-the-art video and audio labs allow students to learn not just from textbooks but by actually recording songs and shooting pictures. Instead of treating arts as an extracurricular diversion or esoteric pursuit, this school encourages students to approach the arts as realistic careers, or at least as skills and processes that might prove useful in other fields. Hallie, for instance, now hopes to make a career in "the technical side of filmmaking—editing, cinematography, postproduction stuff."

"Arts education is so often a theoretical discipline, and so few bridges are ever built to the application of arts and industry, architecture, city planning, and the multimedia industries," says Mary Folberg, the school's founder and Director of Education. "We feel arts are integral to everybody. They are basic human education."

A POWERFUL COMBINATION

The Northwest Academy doesn't sacrifice traditional coursework for the sake of art. Rather, the school sees arts and academics as two equally important facets of a sound education. In cramped quarters in downtown Portland, students have ample opportunity to pursue both. Here, young dancers flex their muscles and stretch their minds, budding artists sculpt their clay and hone their writing skills, and aspiring musicians strive for perfect pitch and struggle with geometry.

With degrees in both dance and English literature, Folberg, 58, is proof that arts and academics make for a powerful combination. She is well known for founding the highly regarded dance program at Jefferson High, an arts magnet school in the Portland district. For 17 years Folberg choreographed and coached the troupe, which performed throughout the United States to critical acclaim. She also watched many of her students struggle with their academic coursework—sometimes because it was too challenging, but often, she suspected, because it wasn't challenging enough to hold their interest, or wasn't delivered in a manner that suited their learning styles. The Northwest Academy is filled with these kinds of students: too different to fit in at a typical school, or too creative to sit still through a day of back-to-back lectures, or too bright to be challenged by grade-level academics.

Long before Folberg left Jefferson, she began thinking about a program that would work for such students. Supporting her instincts with educational research—primarily that of Harvard's Howard Gardner—she began designing a curriculum that would make room for creativity right in the academic classroom. After three years of phone calls, plans, and paperwork, Folberg opened the school to part-time arts elective students in the fall of 1996. One year later, the full-time academic program was up and running. Today the academy has close to 50 full-time students, with 90 more kids from other public and private schools throughout the region taking advantage of the rich elective offerings. Two students actually live on the Oregon coast; their families have rented Portland apartments just so they can attend the academy.

Folberg moves through her school with the grace of a dancer, and she is *always* moving, juggling 10 tasks at once. But she makes time for the students who cruise into her office just to chat. And when she focuses on a topic like the relationship between arts and learning, her attention is undivided, her passion strong.

"I had taught long enough in the arts to know that juxtaposing the arts with academics was the answer," she explains. "You're talking about exploiting multiple intelligences, using all the senses, kinesthetic learning—all these things that Gardner has proved, which we in the arts have known for years, but by trial and error. The research is there, and nobody in schools is taking it too seriously yet. But they are going to need to, at some point."

In schools across the country, mainstream arts education seems to be catching on. Art and music, once seen as gravy to meatier basics like English literature and algebra, are now being linked to a number of benefits for students. Researchers have been building a strong case that the arts foster flexible thinking, collaboration and teamwork, self-discipline, and an appreciation for diversity—traits that have captured the attention not just of educators, but of the business world, as well.

Educating for the Workplace Through the Arts, a 1996 report by the Getty Education Institute for the Arts, suggests that the increasing demand for workers with strong communication skills and technological know-how is changing the way we view the arts. Because students of the arts learn early on that there is no one right way to present an idea, arts education encourages "suppleness of mind" and an ability to "make trade-offs among alternative courses of action," according to the report. In the real world, knowing how to deal with disparate ideas—and shifting intellectual gears accordingly—always beats rigid thinking.

BUILDING NETWORKS OF SUPPORT

The Northwest Academy's community ties offer local evidence of the growing climate of support for arts education. Grants from the Meyer Memorial Trust, philanthropists such as Arlene Schnitzer, and a number of corporations helped pay for much of the school's equipment and furnishings. The school's 20-member board of directors brings together artists, civic leaders, professionals, and executives from such worlds as real estate, lumber, and accounting. Board members serve as mentors and host job shadows.What they get in return is a pool of potential employees and a broader network of support for their art or industry.

Two or three afternoons a week the school opens its doors to visiting professionals in a "lunch event," a forum where people from the real world tell students about different occupations and the backgrounds they require. A far cry from traditional career days, lunch events have featured renowned Portland artists —animator Will Vinton, filmmaker Gus Van Sant, musicians Michael Allen Harrison and the members of Pink Martini—in addition to CEOs, a veterinarian, a former governor, even a nautical archaeologist.

With multimedia industries flourishing in Portland, the school's media arts program has built a stable of local experts. Musician and sound designer Brian Rose first visited the school for a lunch event. Soon afterward, he was recruited to teach sound design and audio engineering. Rose, 43, built the academy's sound lab from the ground up, offering advice on equipment decisions and calling in favors from colleagues to stretch the school's budget as far as possible.

The comprehensive media arts program allows students to explore how film, audio, and computer applications work together. Students get an overview of videography, film editing, and storyboarding, and become proficient on software such as Photoshop, Premier, and SoundEdit Pro. In scriptwriting classes they learn the function and structure of a scene, then expand their storytelling skills to the entire plot. Camera-eye classes teach different lighting, composition, and camera techniques for recording images, while Web design classes examine digital artistry. Rose's sound design students "burn" CDs and record their own soundtracks, and see how sound effects enhance their film or video projects.

Despite the school's attention to cutting-edge technology and real-world skills, Rose believes the greatest thing the school offers its students is the opportunity to "pursue their art for art's sake," something he didn't get when he was growing up in Portland. "I was a 4.0 student with a 3.0 attitude," Rose says. "When I was in high school we had a stage band and a pep band—usually what sports required. It didn't inspire me much. A school like this would have inspired me to pursue the artistic aspects of my music."

BLAZING ACADEMIC TRAILS

The academy's innovative approach to education doesn't stop with the arts. Take Dr. James Winchell's integrated English-Humanities classes. His mixed-ages classes examine the history of human expression in all its forms—philosophy, literature, and fine arts —as well as the things that shape it—revolution, religion, science, industry, and so forth. With years of university teaching under his belt, including five years at Stanford, Winchell, 48, brings a tough reading list and high expectations to his classes. Rigorous discussions challenge students to think for themselves, articulate their

[illegible]

opinions, and defend them. He wants his students to become "conceptual virtuosos," able to apply their knowledge to universal themes and historical significance instead of just downloading important dates or names of Renaissance painters.

"Educators—Howard Gardner first among them—are finding that kids are really good at filling in the blanks and really good at assessing problems that have been precompartmentalized. They are not so good at thinking of solutions 'outside the lines,'" says Winchell. "They need critical-thinking skills because, in life, questions don't come to you in a list of three alternatives from which you choose one. If the students don't get challenged to generate ideas, they aren't going to be able to face many challenges."

Student-generated assessments are the foundation of the academy's proficiency-based curricular structure. Instead of receiving letter grades or percentile rankings, students progress through sequential courses at their own pace, according to demonstrated knowledge and skills. Age and grade level are immaterial. Although all students must meet the same proficiencies, they can demonstrate their knowledge in unique ways. The school assesses students not just through state-required standardized tests, but also through student-driven projects, technological competence, and audio, video, or written work samples.

A proficiency-based approach is also the idea behind Oregon's Certificate of Initial Mastery and Certificate of Advanced Mastery. According to Folberg, "People at the Oregon Department of Education have been very supportive of what we are doing and very helpful. This whole state is supposedly moving toward proficiency-based education, and nobody really knows what that is going to look like manifested in a real building with real kids and real teachers."

If The Northwest Academy comes pretty close to the school Folberg dreamed of building all those years ago, there is one aspect she would like to change. Always looking forward, Folberg hopes that one day the school can operate in the public sector, where it would be more accessible to economically disadvantaged students. This is one of the reasons arts electives are open to part-time students from other schools. Two students are on full scholarship right now and several more receive partial awards, based on merit. Folberg's focus in the next few years will be bringing in grants for scholarships.

"We have a wonderful public school system in this state, and I'm a tried-and-true public school person, philosophically," Folberg stresses. "If we could run this school just as we run it—doing the same innovative things that we do, hiring the same kinds of people that we do—in the public sector, I would do it in a heartbeat." ■

WHERE **PASSION** COMES FIRST

Talent's fine, but it's no requirement at this arts magnet school

Story by LEE SHERMAN
Photos by JUDY BLANKENSHIP

VANCOUVER, Washington—The young applicant sits before the selection committee, pondering the question: What would you like to be when you grow up?

"Well," the sixth-grader says, after a moment's thought, "I'd like to be a lawyer. Or maybe a plumber." Quizzical looks pass among the committee members as they contemplate the deep chasm between unclogging toilets and litigating lawsuits.

But that chasm is only one reason the boy's answer is surprising. The other is this: He's seeking admission to a school where half his day will be awash in watercolors and sonatas, *pliés* and soliloquies. Etchings and engravings by Northwest printmakers hang in the school's foyer. Cellos and bass viols, zipped snugly into brown canvas cases, fill an unused locker room. Down the hall, a string quartet wrestles with a difficult stanza by Schubert, while another ensemble huddles in a cramped practice room, rehearsing Haydn's "Quartet #29." In the gym, dancers leap and spin to the live cadence of a local jazz drummer. A girl works intently in the ceramics studio, shaping a sculpture of rock star Courtney Love —a clay bust sprouting twisted plastic wrap for hair. In the Black Box, a visiting director leads student actors through an exercise in "movement theater," using shimmering black plastic, slithering ropes, howling voices, and frantic drumbeats to create the illusion of a storm at sea.

Does a boy with down-to-earth visions of pipe fittings and legal briefs belong in this magnet school for the arts? Absolutely, says Deb Brzoska, Artistic Director of the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics. The 550-student public school seeks a middle ground, she says, between the rarified atmosphere of a conservatory, which admits only gifted students with lofty artistic ambitions, and the "fuzzy places" that just "play around" with art.

"What we wanted was a program in the arts for anyone," says Brzoska, whose career in arts education spans two decades. "We want to change the culture of the arts in America, where the arts can be part of your life whether you're an attorney or a plumber."

As for the boy wavering between the bar and the wrench, "We just hope he has an aesthetic sensibility about his plumbing or his legal work," she says with a playful smile.

As the first magnet established in the Vancouver School District, the school—which serves sixth- through 12th-graders—had a long waiting list from the moment it opened its doors in 1996. To get in, kids don't need talent. They don't even need good grades. What they do need is passion—a serious desire to study music, dance, theater, visual arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography) literary arts (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama), moving-image arts (film and video production), or, perhaps, all of the above. Although kids who covet a spot in the school don't audition, they don't skate in on a whim, either. Applicants, says Brzoska, must jump through "14 flaming hoops" to earn admission: letters of recommendation, teacher testimonials, informational meetings, parental blessings, and, finally, a personal interview with the selection committee.

"By that time, you've got to *want* to be here," Brzoska notes. "It's a whole lot of trouble."

In the afternoon arts block, students take classes on three levels: "explorer" classes that introduce them to new art forms, "survey" classes that delve a little deeper, and "focus" classes that immerse them in advanced instruction. By graduation, students have experienced, at least briefly, every art form offered at the school. And the arts curriculum is as deep as it is wide. Students ponder historical and cultural questions surrounding various artistic styles and trends. They grapple with ethical issues. Advanced students may compose an *étude*, conduct a symphony, or write and direct a play. Resident and visiting artists share their gifts with students.

But, because one does not live by Beethoven alone, a solid core of academics anchors the program. Students spend their mornings studying algebra and geometry, chemistry and earth sciences, U.S. and world history, Spanish and French. Critics' concerns that arts and academic excellence don't mix were challenged last year when the senior class earned the highest SAT scores in the Clark County. The school doesn't claim full credit, because the students had attended the arts magnet for only two years. But the soaring SAT scores do suggest that serious artists can be serious scholars, too.

Still, art filters into every discipline, no matter how weighty. The chemistry teacher, for instance, is a cellist. Two or three English teachers teach dance as well as Faulkner and Tolstoy. Several history teachers are accomplished painters and sculptors. Studies are woven together in an interdisciplinary tapestry, then dipped in a vat of artistry. Students do theme-based projects, looking for links between subjects and examining how artists express the changing human condition. They create their own metaphors to describe the world as they see it.

"At other schools, you may have to *write* a report," says eighth-grader Katie Uhte-Strohbehn. "But here, you have to dance or act out a report."

One year, the curriculum centered on an exhibit from New York, on loan to the Portland Art Museum located just across the Columbia River from the Vancouver school. Titled "In the American Grain," the show featured the works of Industrial Revolution-era artists Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and John Marin. The exhibit catalog served as textbook.

For this year's theme, Northwest Legends and Landscapes, students are reading Timothy Egan's engaging history, *The Good Rain*. With a grant from Portland Literary Arts, the journalist and historian spent several days at the school, hanging out with the kids and talking about what motivates him as a writer. For a midyear showcase of interdisciplinary projects, student teams chose historic Northwest figures highlighted in Egan's book—John Jacob Astor, the wealthy fur trader who founded Oregon's coastal town of Astoria, for instance. In a hypothetical petition to the National

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PASSION

The Birth of an Actor

Name: Eric Nordstrom
Grade: 12th
Favorite art forms: Theater, dance
Favorite artists: Actors Robin Williams and Kevin Branaugh; playwrights Tom Stoppard and Christopher Durang
Quote: *"The beauty of this school is that when you have an idea, the time, teachers, and resources are available to help you pursue that idea. It gives you the means to practice the craft that you're learning—whether it's theater, dance, music, whatever—and to come up with something that's really all yours, that you invented."*

The six-year-old magician dazzled the audience with his sleight of hand: pulling a scarf with a flourish from thin air (he'd hidden it cleverly in his armpit), and bravely jabbing pins through his thumb (the "thumb" was actually a carrot draped with a handkerchief).

They didn't know it, but the 400 people laughing appreciatively at the little boy's talent show act were witnessing the birth of an actor. The applause got in his blood. He was hooked.

"It was exciting," Eric Nordstrom recalls of his stage debut 11 years ago. "It made me feel good."

Now finishing his last year at the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, the intense, engaging young actor has moved far beyond magic tricks to tackle roles such as Sherlock Holmes's sidekick Dr. Watson, and Dr. Gibbs from Thornton Wilder's classic, *Our Town.* Mostly, though, he relishes working on the "scarce, wonderful plays" that exist on the fringes of the theater. As a sophomore, he won a $900 grant to produce F. Scott Fitzgerald's obscure three-act play *Dada Frost*—a political satire on the Harding administration in which Eric played a character called The Vegetable. In the five months he spent producing the play, Eric earned history credit for studying U.S. politics in the 1920s and exploring the Dada movement in art and literature of that era, for which the play was named. He earned English credits for the character sketches he wrote. He got physics credit for working on lighting effects—blue light on a blue dress, for example. He got geometry and math credit for set design.

Thanks to a school requirement that students explore all the arts, Eric has found another passion: dance. A highlight of his schooling, in fact, was the "great honor" of taking classes from guest instructor Mary Oslund, a nationally known postmodern dancer from Portland. Trying to mimic the synthesized sounds of "technomusic" that accompanies Oslund's dances ("*boww-chkchk-ka-boww, boww-chkchk*"), Eric acknowledges that her style is "kinda far out there." But far out there is where Eric wants to be, artistically.

"It's cool," he says. "It's a real rush."

Dance and acting, Eric has discovered, complement one another.

"Similar techniques and principles are being applied in theater and in dance," he says. "So what I'm doing in dance is making the work I'm doing in theater stronger."

Eric, whose mom is a teacher's assistant and whose dad is a retired psychologist, considers himself "very lucky" to have his parents' unconditional support. If his ambitions had veered toward touchdowns instead of *pas de deux,* he says, they would have been there cheering him on just the same.

While the arts magnet has given Eric the artistic freedom he relishes, he concedes that it's "not meant for everyone." Kids who need a lot of direction from teachers—"read these pages and answer these questions"—would flounder in a school designed for self-directed students, he says. "You really have to be motivated and passionate, and have the commitment to follow through on your ideas."

From college, Eric wants a well-rounded, liberal-arts education. Maybe then he'll consider a conservatory. But he's leaving all avenues open. "One of the things this school has taught me," he says, "is that an academic education helps support what you're doing artistically, and what you're doing artistically helps support what you're doing academically."

The skills he's learned in theater and dance are, he says, "great communication skills, skills for interacting with people—things that can be translated into business and, quote-unquote, real-world stuff."

PASSION

Using Her Gifts

Name: Brittany Gadbury
Grade: Ninth
Favorite art forms: Dance, theater, orchestra
Favorite artist: Bruce Smith, choreographer for the Northwest African-American Ballet
Quote: *"In science, the projects ask you to make connections to this and this and this. When you write papers, it's not just putting down information. You present it, you perform it, you can interpret it another way. It's different, and it challenges you."*

"My mom says that when God gives you a gift, you need to use it," says Brittany Gadbury with simple conviction.

Brittany has been blessed with not one, but many gifts. And using them, she is. Ever since her first childhood role as a bunny rabbit in *Hansel and Gretel,* she has been performing. In ballet classes for tots. In the church choir. In front of Dad's camcorder. At the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics—where multiple interests aren't just encouraged, they're required—she sings, she acts, she plays violin. But dance is her real passion. When the Portland-based dance troupe, the Northwest African-American Ballet, performed at the arts magnet last year, she "fell in love" with the work of choreographer Bruce Smith.

"Oh my gosh, that was the most beautiful, awesome thing I ever saw in my whole life!" she says.

In an afternoon dance warm-up, Brittany jumps and spins fluidly inside a tight cluster of other dancers, passing just millimeters from their twirling bodies, yet never colliding with them. In a gray tunic and floppy black pants, her thick hair wound into two tight knots, Brittany has an aura of studied serenity—a certainty about who she is and where she's going. Committed to her Christian faith and eager to relearn the Spanish she picked up from a childhood nanny, she looks with excitement toward a future bursting with possibilities—from an inner-city ministry to a return to the Dominican Republic where she spent last summer with a church group.

"I want to blend in dance and theater any way I possibly can, no matter what I do," she says.

But she admits that her devotion to the arts hasn't always been so rock solid. She went through "a little phase" when she questioned her commitment. Was art "just pointless?" she asked herself. An irrelevant world unto itself?

"Nobody knows about it or focuses on it in the other world—the world of sports and technical stuff, you know, and business. I'm like, no one even cares. Why should I do something that no one's going to care about?"

Her questioning brought her full circle to the place she had begun. In the end, her doubts didn't shake her core belief that art is "an amazing thing." She concluded that art "*can* be incorporated" meaningfully in the mainstream of life and work.

Brittany's parents, both educators (her mom's an ESL coordinator and her dad's a math teacher), moved the family north from Long Beach, California, driven out by crowds and gangs when Brittany was in grade school. She marvels at the lack of "Gs"—gangsters or wannabes—at the arts magnet. She can recall only two or three fights at the school during its three-year history, and those were of the "one swing, it's done" variety, she says.

"The vandalism thing doesn't happen," she says. When some girls smeared the boys' restroom with makeup and Vaseline for an April Fools prank, the other students "were really, really angry," Brittany recalls. "There's so much respect for the janitors. People really respect them and defend them."

She says the school's small size ("we're eensy") makes for close student-teacher relationships ("big time!") and respectful student-student interactions. Summing up, she says, "It's so strange how *nice* we are!"

PASSION

Hitting the High Notes

Name: Katie Uhte-Strohbehn
Grade: Eighth
Favorite art forms: Choir, theater
Favorite artist: William Shakespeare
Quote: *"This school is a place where you can feel really at home. It's such a small school compared to a lot of others, so you get to know a lot of other people. The people here, especially the teachers, are so willing and so open."*

As Katie Uhte-Strohbehn's voice rises to a high B, her knees bend and her body sinks several inches toward the floor. In unison, the 27 other girls in the intermediate choir sink to the soaring high note. On the low note, Katie and her classmates rise high onto their toes. Up, up. Then down, down. Rising and sinking in opposition to the notes.

"Thinking of contrary motion will make the high notes seem easier," choir director Margaret Green explains to the voice students clustered before her. "When you're approaching a high note, think *dow-w-w-n* (she bends her knees deeply for emphasis), allowing everything to drop. OK, her-r-r-r-e (*snap-snap*, her fingers click briskly) we go!"

As the vocal-music class continues, Green engages her students in a lively dialogue about the songs they are rehearsing—"Escape at Bedtime," "Windy Nights," and "The Moon"—a trilogy based on the poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson. They discuss the shades of meaning and the nuances of sound that bring life to the lyrics and resonance to the notes by Northwest composer Donna Schulz.

"Do we all realize that a particular piece of music can be interpreted in a multitude of ways?" Green asks.

Katie nods as she listens carefully to the discussion. After practice, Katie says: "Ms. Green, my choir teacher, is a very, very good person who influences you. She has real character, and a lot of spunk. She's really, really great."

Katie's singing talent surfaced in fifth grade during the music block required of all Vancouver elementary students.

"One day, I started singing louder than everyone else," she remembers. "Everyone started turning and looking at me, and my teacher was like, 'Yeah! You're doing really well.' She asked me to sing a solo for fifth-grade graduation. I was really happy about that."

After that, Katie says, "Music stuck with me."

Says Green: "This is the way Katie expresses herself best—through her voice. She's always really focused in, always right on."

Brought to America from Korea as an infant, Katie lives just a few blocks from the school with her adoptive parents, a substitute teacher and a librarian. Music fills their home. Her dad plays piano, and her mom plays an eclectic collection of CDs, from classical to Linda Ronstadt. Yearly trips to the Shakespearean Festival in Ashland, Oregon, have instilled in Katie a love of the Bard.

Before she settles down to college and career, Katie longs to explore the world, especially the land of her ancestors. Someday, she wants to work with kids. "I *might* become a music teacher," she says tentatively. But who knows? The world is big and the possibilities endless. When you "open yourself up" to new challenges, new art forms, and new ideas, she says, "You never know what you might find." ■

WHERE DOES ART "HAPPEN"? Contrary to popular belief, quality art events and educational programs with the power to uplift or enlighten young minds are not limited to big-city museums and grand performance halls. Art "happens" throughout the Northwest—on both sides of the mountains, and in rural places as well as in urban centers. Even small museums tend to offer educational programming. Whether you're a principal looking to bring artists or performers into your school, a teacher hoping to deepen your own understanding of the arts, or a parent in search of enriching arts activities for your child, your own community probably offers a wide range of cultural events and programs. State arts agencies can help connect you with local resources. Here's a sampling.

ALASKA

Alaska State Council on the Arts [(907) 269-6610] manages an arts-in-education program to promote teaching the arts as an integral part of life, in all parts of the state, and to maintain Alaska's rich artistic diversity. The council sponsors an artists-in-residence program and offers incentive grants to help schools make the arts part of basic education.

Alaska Arts Education Summer Academy [(907) 262-0369], at Kenai Peninsula College in Soldotna, is an intensive summer institute in arts education, supported by a grant from the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. During the first week, designed for teachers and administrators, experts demonstrate and explain how to provide comprehensive arts education, incorporating the state arts content standards. During the second week, the experts gear their workshops for children from preschool through high school. Dr. Kathy Schwartz conducts more presentations throughout the year on how to teach the arts in a comprehensive way. She directs the Alaska Center for Excellence in Arts Education.

IDAHO

Idaho Commission on the Arts [(208) 334-2119] emphasizes arts education at the community level. An Arts Education Program offers grant and technical assistance to schools and community organizations. Folk Arts in Schools program offers residencies and intensive experience in folklore and folk arts. Summer workshops on teaching the visual arts are offered in conjunction with the state Department of Education. The Whittenberger Summer Writing Project conducts a summer institute for teachers and high school students. The interdisciplinary teaching staff includes a nationally known photojournalist, biologist-nature writer, musician-storyteller, and Idaho's poet laureate, David Lee. Information about the project, now in its 17th year, is available online www.acofi.edu/~library/whitt/index.html).

MONTANA

Montana Arts Council [(406) 444-6430], sponsors an Artists in the Schools/Communities residency program to promote and expand quality arts education experiences for all citizens of the state. Traveling exhibits include trunks filled with hands-on materials relating to historic and cultural themes. Partnership grants with Montana's Tribal Colleges aim to improve and enhance arts education for children.

Missoula Children's Theatre [(406) 444-6430] offers a variety of opportunities for children in grades K-12 to get on stage. An international touring program takes children's theater into local communities via little red trucks packed with stage props, costumes, lighting, and other essentials. Local children audition, rehearse, and—a week later—perform a full-scale musical for their community. A summer camp in Montana attracts schoolchildren from across the country for an intensive theater experience, culminating with a performance on the stage of the company's brand new arts center in Missoula.

OREGON

Oregon Arts Commission [(503) 986-0083] coordinates with a network of regional programs to promote arts in education. The Regional Arts and Culture Council serves the Portland metro area [(503) 823-5111]. The council coordinates artist residencies, brings architects into schools to teach students about the built environment, publishes an arts resources directory, and is working with 11 ArtsPlan schools to encourage and support arts offerings in the classroom.

Pacific Northwest College of Art [(503) 226-4391] sponsors a four-week summer institute for high school students. Sequential studies of composition, the figure, and interpretive work culminate in a student art show.

WASHINGTON

Washington State Arts Commission [(360) 586-2418] offers a variety of programs to promote the arts as basic to the education of Washington's youth. The commission funds residencies, sponsors touring artists, and provides grants for arts organizations to create collaborative projects with schools. A Biennial Arts Education Conference brings together teachers, artists, administrators, parents, and community volunteers. This year's conference, Conceiving the Future: Artists, Schools and Communities of the 21st Century, takes place May 20-22 in Tacoma, in conjunction with the Washington Cultural Congress VI.

Seattle Art Museum's Teacher Resource Center [(206) 654-3186] offers hands-on information about art and culture, curriculum materials related to the museum's collections, and teacher-training workshops. Outreach Suitcases, which teachers can check out for two-week loans, contain touchable art objects, curriculum guides, and transparencies that show objects within a cultural context.

—*S.B.*

PROFITING FROM ART

Story by TIM COMFORT Illustration by Blake [illegible]

Ever since I arrived in Sisters, Oregon, four years ago, I have been aware of the strong artistic influence in our community. Art galleries and an annual quilt show attract visitors, help fuel the local economy, and bring creative people to this area. However, I also have been aware of the great budget debates and difficulties in deciding what to cut and what to fund within our school arts programs.

We never have had a visual arts specialist at Sisters Elementary School. (We have teaching specialists for music and physical education.) Without an expert on staff, how have we met student and staff needs in the arts? Or satisfied a strong interest group's preferences for art in our school? Basically, each year we have had an artist or two work with our students through an artists-in-residence program. Volunteer artists, parent helpers, and staff have worked to integrate art with other subjects. Various grade-level art projects have been tied to a schoolwide art scope and sequence. But is this enough?

After the "art issue" surfaced in at least three parent meetings, we decided to explore ways to enhance what we offer our students. We have developed many new directions, but one project has been unique and quite successful.

Our project began in fall 1997 with discussion that included a local artist and parent named Paul Bennett; teacher Diane Jacobsen; Lucy Burton, Sisters Community College Center Director; and myself. We were looking at projects and activities that would help fund artists-in-residence programs. Coincidentally, our Sisters Parent, Teacher, and Community group was focusing on arts within the elementary school. Burton promoted the idea of grant writing and spread the word about the Oregon Arts Commission Grants. Soon, we developed an interest group plus a work group to develop the various partners, grant writing, and process. Ultimately, we submitted a grant proposal to develop a student-made collection of sketches, games, and activities that would describe and highlight the history and points of interest in our Sisters area. We hoped to create a humorous and interesting book to sell to our community and tourists, generating revenues to support future art projects at our school.

When our grant application was approved in January 1998, we moved forward. However, we had to adjust our budget, plan, and activities because the allocation was 50 percent less than our proposal. That meant a longer timeline to compensate the participating artist and more risk to cover our costs.

In the early spring of 1998, Bennett met with each of our fourth-grade classes to assess their attitudes and their sketching and drawing skills. Then, for the next five months, he met with these three classes every week. Each session was cofacilitated by the classroom teacher and the artist. "What the students enjoyed most," Bennett said, "was simply learning how to draw." At first, he modeled sketching techniques on the chalkboard and encouraged students to draw with him. As their skills progressed, he encouraged them to draw their own ideas and designs. He allowed for student and teacher practice and evaluated progress. Periodically, Bennett and the teachers met to review the project and plan the next steps toward integrating sketching with the social studies curriculum.

By mid-May, the students had completed their sketches, using a whimsical style to depict sites and people significant in local history.

The students wrote stories to accompany their artwork. Meanwhile, Bennett and I developed a publishing plan to produce a booklet, *Sisters through the Eyes of Sisters' Kids*. At the end of the school year, with our 72-page booklet printed, we held book signings and sales, attended by students and the resident artist.

Booklet sales continued over the summer and into the fall. By September we broke even, covering our costs to produce the booklet and compensate the artist, and are now making a profit.

Then we moved into Phase Two to help bridge school-to-work and art-to-business, with particular focus on serving the needs of our at-risk students. We formed three business work groups around research and development, marketing, and sales. By Thanksgiving, we had developed a new, related project: greeting cards made from select student sketches. We diversified our marketing and sales to local businesses, Bend businesses, and fairs and special activities. Thirty students who were now fifth-graders participated in this phase, and at least 20 percent of them were students we would characterize as "at risk."

Another side project was developed independently by the local Sisters Bakery: a coffee mug featuring a student sketch. The bakery owner proposed selling these mugs, and encouraged other businesses to do the same. Two other businesses have joined the team. They chose different student sketches for their mugs. Thirty-three percent of the money generated from the sales of mugs will come back to our school to fund art education.

With a funding base in place, we are now planning our future artist residence and arts activities.

Overall, this project has been a great success in developing student and teacher sketching abilities, enhancing their understand and appreciation of art, and developing marketable, profitable art products.

What worked: specific work teams for various stages of the project; public relations efforts with our parents, community, and the larger region; our artist's classroom instructions for sketching; our art business groups. Students and staff can now draw and sketch much better, and enjoy art more. They shared and appreciated the fun and humor that this project inspired. We received good newspaper coverage and positive community feedback.

This project was a worthwhile "risk." All grants involve time and energy, with no assurance of success. In fact, we were the only school to receive a grant from the Oregon Arts Commission. I also learned how to work with artists in a great partnership. I was reminded again how much time and energy special projects entail, but that their rewards are of equal or more value.

Tim Comfort is Principal of Sisters Elementary School. ■

PASSION

Continued from Page 36

Endowment for the Humanities, each team tried to persuade the funding agency that this heroic or enterprising person merits a monument in his or her honor. Accompanying each petition was a model of the monument. Faculty and staff served as judges.

The school's commitment to blending art with interdisciplinary academics has earned it a prestigious five-year grant from the College Board and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts. The school—one of only five grantees in the United States—will get $25,000 a year to spend on interdisciplinary arts projects, plus access to two professional mentors: art professor and critic Terry Barrett from the University of Ohio, and curriculum expert Alice Kawazoe, an assistant superintendent from Pittsburg, California. In return, the school will provide data for a longitudinal study of the impact of arts training on academic achievement.

As a public school, the magnet gets the same number of per-pupil dollars as every other school in the Vancouver School District. (Unlike many magnet schools in larger urban centers, the school receives no funding from the federal magnet program designed to integrate ethnic groups.) But this is a district that shows serious commitment to arts education. All elementary students have an "integrated arts block" every week, devoted to vocal music, visual arts, and creative dance, and taught by a team of arts specialists. Students also take instrumental music twice weekly.

Calling the arts "a gateway to improved learning," the district holds the philosophy that by "teaching creative approaches to problem solving, enlarging the imagination, and instilling both discipline and wonder," the arts spill over to enrich and enhance learning in all subjects, says Brzoska, who is also Director of K-12 Visual and Performing Arts for the district.

Despite the districtwide commitment to the arts, budget realities still shape programming. That means making trade-offs, says Brzoska. So, at the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, there are no sports. Dance replaces PE. Foreign language is the only elective outside the arts block. The science labs are spare. The furniture is used. And nothing's fancy, not even the art labs.

"You put your money into what *really* counts—the teachers and the artists," says Brzoska. "You get the people in place, and the other stuff just kind of comes." ■

ONLINE SOURCES

ONLINE ARTS RESOURCES for classroom teachers, arts specialists, students, and parents offer a dazzling and ever-expanding array of creative ideas. Many sites include links to other Web pages that focus on the arts. Here's a sampling from local, regional, and national sources.

ARTS EDGE (artsedge.kennedy-center.org), a cooperative project of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, includes a wide range of resources, from the National Standards for the Arts to a Curriculum Studio to assist teachers in arts lesson planning to a Web Spotlight, showcasing art by students.

ARTSEDNET (www.artsednet.getty.edu), sponsored by the Getty Education Institute for the Arts, offers a wealth of classroom materials, research, and arts-advocacy information. Classroom teachers share detailed plans for teaching visual art in a disciplined way. Visual arts images, such as a collection of murals by Mexican American artists, bring teaching concepts to life.

ARTS EDUCATION ONLINE (www.ucop.edu/tcap/aeol.html), sponsored by The California Arts Project (TCAP), offers professional-development resources for educators working in the visual and performing arts. Web site resources include references and research materials, discussion groups, an interactive arena, and links to other "hot spots."

ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (www.aep-arts.org), a national coalition that promotes the essential role of arts education, provides online links to member organizations and arts advocacy resources.

ARTSOURCE (www.uky.edu/Artsource/about.html), which began as a service to art librarians, includes a selective list of image collections, ranging from French cave paintings to graffiti art.

THE COMMUNITY DISCOVERED (communitydisc.wst.esu3.k12.ne.us/HTML/info/sbs.html), is a five-year project linking technology and the arts with other subject areas. The goal is to develop models of engaged student learning using technology and the resources of the Internet. Conducted by Westside Community Schools in Omaha, the project expands on Prairie Visions, a consortium of nearly 100 school districts, art museums, the Nebraska University system, and other agencies.

EDSITEMENT (edsitement.neh.gov/), a humanities-related education site created by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council of the Great City Schools, MCI WorldCom, and the National Trust for the Humanities, includes resources for teaching English, history, art history, and foreign languages.

EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION (www.etassoc.org/tea.html), a national professional organization for teachers of theater, offers online information about professional development and advocacy.

GROWING UP WITH ART (www.seattleartmuseum.org/Departments/education/), a collaborative project developed by the Seattle Art Museum and several Seattle Public Schools, includes a Web site through which teachers can access the museum's collections of Asian, African, and Native American art and obtain educational materials. Sequential unit plans appropriate for grades two through six weave art-making activities with writing and research projects.

MUSIC EDUCATORS NATIONAL CONFERENCE (www.menc.org/index2.html), offers links and resources for music educators.

NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (www.naea-reston.org), offers online resources for its 17,000 members.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES (www.nasaa-arts.org), with members from each of the 50 states and six jurisdictional governments, works to increase participation in the arts in communities of all sizes. The Web site includes links to state arts agencies, many of which are involved in innovative approaches to arts education and provide creative alternatives for at-risk youth.

NATIONAL DANCE ASSOCIATION (www.aahperd.org/nda/html), supports dance teachers and promotes national standards in the discipline of dance.

NEW HORIZONS FOR LEARNING (www.newhorizons.org), a Seattle-based, nonprofit network that promotes the use of electronic technologies to expand learning opportunities, includes The Art Studio, with links to journal articles, electronic "galleries," and arts-centered school Web sites.

NATIONAL PTA (www.pta.org/programs/cultrini.html) offers links to parenting resources promoting arts education, including a "Be Smart, Include Art" library.

PROJECT ZERO (pzweb.harvard.edu), of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, works to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts and other disciplines. The Web page includes descriptions of research projects by Howard Gardner and other Project Zero investigators and researchers, and a link to ALPS (Active Learning Practices for Schools), a new program designed to make resources readily available to schools.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN ART, better known as STArt (www.open.k12.or.us/start/), is an online project of the Oregon Public Education Network. Developed for teachers by fellow teachers, artists, and arts specialists throughout Oregon, STArt is intended to be "a place to begin" to incorporate the arts into the classroom and help students meet arts standards. An Arts for All Seasons Calendar offers ideas for bringing the arts into the classroom throughout the year, either as stand-alone projects or as part of a sequence to build skills over time. Detailed lesson plans for grades K-8 in the visual arts and music will eventually be expanded to include all the arts.

THEATRELINK (www.mtc-nyc.org/theatre/ed/threatrelink.html), an educational project of the Manhattan Theatre Club, shows how the World Wide Web can bring distant students together for learning opportunities. This year, for instance, high school students from Ashland, Oregon, are participating in an interactive, multimedia theater project with youth from New York, Texas, West Virginia, Florida, and other states.

—S.B.

APPLAUDING THE ARTS

Continued from Page 10

research and makes it available in meaningful ways to school personnel and decisionmakers

To reach these goals in an era of tight budgets, many schools are building partnerships with their local arts communities to stretch and expand resources. In the Northwest, for instance, the Seattle Art Museum has embarked on a four-year program to develop arts resources for the classroom. Young Audiences, a national organization that brings professional artists into schools for residencies and performances, is developing a pilot program in Oregon to support teachers with multimedia arts resources.

Off Its Pedestal

Harnessing the arts to improve education makes some art advocates nervous, even as this young movement increases the chances that the arts will find a lasting place—and gain solid financial backing—within the basic curriculum.

Eisner, in a thoughtful essay published in the *Arts Education Policy Review* (September-October 1998), cautions that turning to the arts to improve academic achievement leaves the arts "vulnerable to any other field or education practice that claims it can achieve the same aims faster and better .... We do the arts no service when we try to make their case by touting their contributions to other fields."

In *American Canvas*, Deasy acknowledges that some critics will "look askance at" expecting art "to solve social problems, stimulate the economy, improve the young, and otherwise serve the common good .... In a perfect world, we might expect the arts to justify their claim on the public purse and the private largesse on the basis of their intrinsic worth." Yet he is undeterred. Within the core curriculum, he argues, math, science, reading, and writing have traditionally been associated with a kind of rigor or muscularity. So are sports. "The arts, therefore, must be positioned as equally tough. Toward this end the research evidence on the developments they produce in the growing brain and body of the child and young person should be continually documented and presented."

Despite the pressure on the national and state levels to define and evaluate arts education—to make it more measurable, more "muscular"—the arts will probably manage to resist narrow typecasting or strictly utilitarian purposes. Teaching the arts in a deliberate, disciplined way won't take the awe out of hearing a symphony or dull the joy in a dance performance. Music, theater, dance, drawing, in all their many forms, are examples of "emotion, wrapped in intelligence," according to Eric Oddleifson, Chairman of the Center for the Arts in the Basic Curriculum. Teasing apart what that definition means takes more than words. It involves seeing what images come to mind—thinking like an artist, actively engaged in learning.

Online resources for this article include: *American Canvas* (1997), National Endowment for the Arts (arts.endow.gov); *Arts and Education: Partners in Achieving Our National Educational Goals* (1995), collaborative publication available from Arts Education Partnership (aep-arts.org); *Educating for the Workplace Through the Arts*, Getty Center (www.artsednet.getty.edu/ArtsEdNet/Advocacy/Workplace/workplace.html); *Eloquent Evidence*, 1995 report of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (artsedge.kennedy-center.org/evid/eloq-evid.html); *How the Arts Contribute to Education*, 1996 research review commissioned by the Association for the Advancement of Arts Education (www.aae.org/artsbro/arts_bro.htm); *National Standards for Arts Education: What Students Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts* (www.ed.gov/pubs/ArtsStandards.htm); *The Power of the Arts to Transform Education*, 1993 recommendations of the Arts Education Partnership Working Group (artsedge.kennedy-center.org/db/af/g2/power.html). ■

BRINGING ARTISTS INTO THE SCHOOLS ISN'T EXACTLY A NEW IDEA. Young Audiences, a national art-in-education organization, has been doing this successfully for more than 40 years, enlivening classrooms with performances and residencies by professional artists.

But what about bringing artists and teachers into a sort of creative hothouse, where together they might imagine new ways of helping students learn? And how about using cutting-edge technology to share these ideas—along with links to local community arts resources—with any teacher who has access to the Internet and a CD-ROM drive?

These are exciting new developments, indeed, as *Northwest Education* learned in a recent roundtable discussion with the staff of Young Audiences of Oregon and Southwest Washington. The chapter's Executive Director, Sarah Avery Johnson, and Education Director, Christine Caton, offered a preview of a brand-new, multimedia project called, appropriately, Arts for Learning.

NW EDUCATION: How did this ambitious project get started?

JOHNSON: We've always recruited artists who love kids and truly are good teachers. But over the last couple years, we've become increasingly aware of the importance of having artists on the Young Audiences roster who can talk teacher talk. As the education reform environment heated up in Oregon and Washington, many of our artists were left to work in a vacuum. They needed to know about the changes that were going on in the classroom. We developed some workshops called Arts Spark for artists to bring them up to speed on education reform. Our artists began to understand the relationship they could have with teachers in working to educate the child. We realized that this was a really magical thing, and that was the kernel.

CATON: Rather than a departure from our mission, Arts for Learning is a way to light a fire under what we've already been doing. It broadens and deepens our program, so that it really warms all the parties involved in arts in education.

NW EDUCATION: Where do teachers enter the picture?

JOHNSON: Last spring, we invited some teachers to an Arts Spark-type workshop. With artists and teachers together in a creative situation, they began to feed off each other, learn from each other. They really began to *get it*, as far as how they can work together to achieve successful teaching and really integrate the arts into the curriculum. So the first strand of the program was to generate creative teaching strategies, collaboratively developed by teachers and artists. It's not artists coming up with teaching strategies, or teachers coming up with arts strategies, but both of them working together and learning to talk each other's language.

NW EDUCATION: These must have been high-energy workshops.

JOHNSON: The dialogues! For three and a half days in December, we had 22 artists and 31 teachers from all over the state gathered for a workshop. And it wasn't all talk. Teachers could observe art residencies—see how a clay artist could enhance what students know about science, for instance. And artists gained new awareness of how what they do helps students reach state learning goals.

CATON: One of our artists, a dancer from Oregon Ballet Theatre, realized during the workshop that she's teaching about the math content standards in her dance workshops. Now that she knows that, and knows the vocabulary, it makes all the difference. And kids have the capacity to see these connections, too.

NW EDUCATION: What happens next?

JOHNSON: The next strand is using technology to disseminate what we've learned. We're developing a Web site to share this information with anyone who's online. A teacher in someplace like Fossil, Oregon, will be able to read about integrating art into the social studies curriculum, for instance, then see a video demonstration of an artist doing just that, then click on a resources box that will lead directly to arts resources right in that community. This wonderful technology allows us to reach out to every classroom teacher in the region. We expect to have a prototype ready to roll out by late April, when the national Young Audiences conference comes to Portland.

NW EDUCATION: What's the long-term goal?

JOHNSON: We want to raise teachers' awareness of this resource and get people to be aware of the importance of arts in their own communities. Arts advocacy is the final phase of the program.

NW EDUCATION: We understand that, in partnership with Portland State University, you'll also be conducting a longitudinal study to see how this program affects student learning. Is Young Audiences shifting away from the *fun* of kids doing art with real artists?

JOHNSON: Young Audiences grew up as an organization that knew intuitively that the arts are good for kids. Therefore, programming went into schools, and kids got their "arts vitamin" for the day. Now, our real target is teachers. If we don't reach them, we won't reach the kids. We can provide a lot of quality arts programming, but the real impact happens if a skillful teacher uses that to enhance learning in the classroom. This is revolutionary for us.

NW EDUCATION: How are you paying for this innovative project?

JOHNSON: We've had a generous gift from U.S. Bank, support from the Oregon Commission for the Arts and other sources, and wonderful encouragement from the state Department of Education.

After August, Arts for Learning can be located on the World Wide Web at www.arts4learning.org

Sarah Johnson

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identify places where good things are happening,
provide descriptions of effective techniques being used,
suggest useful resources, and submit letters to the editor.

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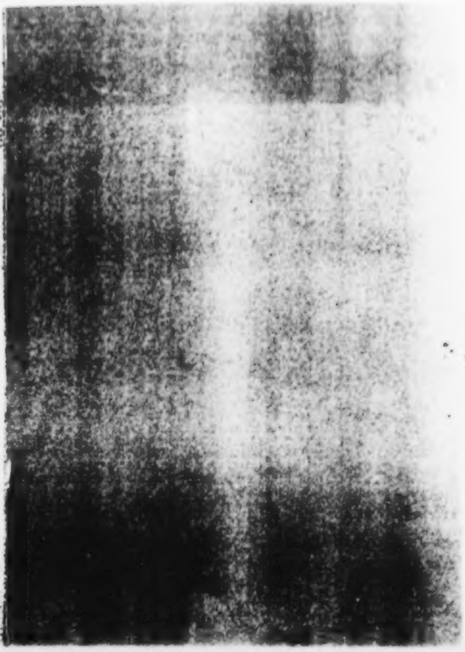

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